A MAN of PURPOSE

DONALD RICHBERG

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A MAN *of* PURPOSE

BY

DONALD RICHBERG

AUTHOR OF
"THE SHADOW MEN," ETC.

I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me. . . .
—FRANCIS THOMPSON
"The Hound of Heaven."

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FOREWORD

THE day after Merrill's disappearance I received by express a box containing a jumbled mass of papers, some typewritten but evidently Merrill's composition, and some in his handwriting. No explanatory letter accompanied this manuscript. I have received no message from him since. These papers I have studied carefully. They do not solve the newspaper "mystery" of his exit. They do explain his experience of living, so far as a man can explain his life by conscientious self-analysis and candid recording of his thought and action.

Probably Merrill was not a great man, although he sat high in the councils of state and many of his enthusiastic friends thought that he might some day reach the presidency. But his life was to my mind a great life, a constant struggle for domination between powerful mind motives—vanities, idealisms; —and powerful body motives—educated appetites, flesh hungers. A strong mind and a strong body fought together and against each other in a life-long war against the world and a civil war within the warrior.

In the pages that follow, Merrill will tell his own story, arranged for the most part in chapters as he

wrote them. At times I have felt that the manuscript was too detailed or tiresomely technical to be of general interest, and I have condensed it; and there were gaps in the narrative where I have supplied a little history.

But it is clear to me that Merrill did not wish to leave behind him a mere story of his life, as such a tale is commonly written. He tried to write down how his mind developed as his bodily powers waxed and waned. Most of all he sought to make comprehensible that elusive thing called the spirit, which, he believed, supplies the motive power of life. He had no liking for the mechanistic, chemical idea of life. He came more and more to put his faith in the existence of a spiritual force having no dimensions, infinite in power, which energizes all life.

He makes this most plain in his chapter entitled: "The God Who Grew" where he discusses the dynamic power of sex in energizing men and women to accomplish the sexless purpose of life. His story of his life is really the story of The God Who Grew in himself—the development of that part of life which he believed to be immortal. But since there is so little of orthodox religion in Merrill's manuscript, and since the theme of his life is essentially that of a man always seeking first to formulate some purpose in life and then to accomplish something of that purpose, I have thought it best to entitle his work with a thumbnail sketch of what the author tried to be: A Man of Purpose.

D. R.

BOOK I

MYTH

A MAN OF PURPOSE

CHAPTER I

"He Had a Good Bringing-up"

UNTIL I was twenty-four years old I was being brought up by my parents. I would not say that I was being educated—because at the age of twenty-four I was not a well-educated person. Yet my parents had done well the job which they set out to do with the red-faced, helpless little animal who yelled his resentment at the annoyances of birth on June 30, 1875. So I shall use a homely phrase and say that I had a good bringing-up.

They named me Rodney—my mother's maiden name. I have been grateful many times since for the names they did not give me, names which decorate some of my friends as pink ribbons adorn a bulldog. They coddled me for six years in sickness and in health. Then I was sent to school and was taught things for eighteen years. I did not learn a great deal from my teachers or my books, because during most of my school days living had no meaning or purpose to me. Therefore, I did not absorb or digest much knowledge about how to live.

There is little real interest in being told how to

do a thing before one knows why he is doing it. Hence, until I had some notion of why I was living, I was not intensely interested in learning how to live.

As a result, between the ages of six and twelve I declined from the proud position of a "star pupil" to that of a "mischief-maker" whose scholarship marks were only fair. If my teachers had sensed the reason they probably would have told me that nobody knew why he was living, and advised me to learn how to live and then to live well and to wait patiently until after death to learn why I had lived. The hungry mind of youth is usually fed that sort of chaff.

I remember well the joy of my first school days. For two years I had studied my gayly painted blocks and my highly illustrated linen books, with the encouragement of a wondering and wonderful mother. My early rapid progress convinced both mother and father that their first-born was a prodigy. Few parents require much convincing on this score. Their praise stirred my vanity—always a powerful incentive—and I redoubled my efforts to astonish them. When I entered school I found a wider field before me—the astonishing of a large company of children who did not know that c-a-t spelled "cat," or—still more marvelous achievement—that a-p-r-i-c-o-t spelled "apricot" which was a f-r-u-i-t.

It had been the delight of my parents to give me the newspaper in the presence of admiring guests who gasped and exclaimed while I read the news of the day, spelling out carefully the unfamiliar words.

So on my fourth day in school I staged a little play for public attention by bringing a newspaper with me, which I read ostentatiously. The teacher, an acidulous maiden lady, whose methods of discipline were always some form of humiliation, summoned me to the platform with the announcement:

"Rodney Merrill will please come forward and read to the class what he finds so interesting in the newspaper."

Whereupon, amid giggles and whispers, a very small, over-scrubbed boy, in the glory of a broad white collar and blue bow tie, wabbled forward, scared almost dumb with the success of his strategy, and began to read in a quivering voice the leading crime story of the day. The performance came to an abrupt end. The principal of the school was summoned and I was transferred to the second year grade.

This success in passing through first year in four days gave me an evil fame. I was branded precocious, although there was in fact nothing exceptional in my intellectual powers. But I had to live up to a reputation. I felt that I must be the brightest boy in my class and for some years I was a zealous student. I grew physically very slowly and, therefore, was not successful in athletic games. So vanity kept me working away at my books, whereby I could excel my fellows. Year by year my small scholastic triumphs grew. I recited on all state occasions: "The Blue and the Gray" on Decoration Day, "The Gettysburg Address" on Lincoln's birthday. I won

the school debating championship. I wrote a prize essay on Patriotism—an exquisite example of bombast: "High on the mount of civilization stands Patriotism. Flowers of peace, invention and prosperity bloom about her, nourished by soil rich with the blood of patriots."

Then came my last year in the elementary school and, with the highest honors within reach, my intellectual stride weakened; I lost interest in the race. It did not seem worth while. I dawdled through, graduating easily but without special honor and not caring much for the ruin of my early reputation.

Two things had happened. I had found the joy of outdoor games. I had felt the lure of woman. Woman as she appeared to me wore her hair in braids; her skirts were short and her hands were often dirty. But her scorn would chill and her smile would thrill me as never since those years of blissful ignorance.

My changed view of life was simply this: I became conscious of my body as a source of pleasure. Hitherto my body had been a source of pain. My youth was quite sickly. I had all the typical diseases —and a few extras. Toothaches and earaches and headaches companioned me. When I was technically well and played with the boys I was clumsy, weak and inept. When I curled up in a chair with my beloved books I was happy. Exercising my mind brought me pleasure: I besieged Troy with Achilles and wandered home through many lands with Ulysses. I feasted with the gods upon Olympus.

I rode beside Cæsar, William the Conqueror and Napoleon across the battlefields of the world. The great myth of history enthralled me.

For six years I lived in stories of a never-was past and in dreams of a never-to-be future. Then I awoke to the fact of the present, to the existence of a body that tingled, that exulted in muscular emotion, that had queer pain-sweet sensations at the touch of a girl's hands.

We stayed at a farm house the summer before I entered high school and the farmer had a girl a little older than I—and much wiser. Her name was Daisy. We romped together a great deal after I overcame my first embarrassment at the unmanly sport of playing with a girl. We rowed a boat; we picked berries along the roadside; we did small chores around the place. Daisy was a blue-eyed girl with yellow hair. She was soft and rounded without being fat. The girls I had noticed at school were mostly brunettes and either thin or fat. At least so it seemed to me, because Daisy appeared entirely different from any girl I had ever known. She seemed all pink and clean and ethereal compared with darker, more earthy maids at school.

She wore her dresses fairly long, but she was quite a tomboy and when we raced or climbed fences I often observed what pretty legs she had. The fact that I could not see them all the time somehow increased their attractiveness to me and I caught myself watching for glimpses of their hidden beauty.

I thought a great deal about Daisy when I was

away from her, and when I was with her I was quite happy in a strange, scared way. After a while I realized I was deeply in love with Daisy—so deeply in love that I dreaded to offend her by any familiarities which she might not like. I thought she would appreciate the respect I thus exhibited. Perhaps she did, but I have doubted it in later years. Particularly I doubted it when I remembered our parting at the end of the summer.

Just before the carriage took our family to the station I had a long talk with Daisy in the hay-loft. I said much about writing and hoping she would visit the city and talked vaguely about plans for the future and how I expected she would see me come back to the farm some day. She was a polite but not an enthusiastic listener. Then I heard father calling and we clambered down to the ground. At the barn door I stopped and got hold of her hand for a tremulous moment during which I stammered something about hating to say good-bye. Then she said: "Silly," and to my horror and joy suddenly kissed me and immediately pushed me out into the publicity of the barn-yard, where the carriage was waiting. Five minutes later we drove away and I never saw Daisy again.

All the way home I wondered if I had not made a mistake in feeling that she would have resented a less respectful adoration than that I had given her all summer. A retrospect of lost opportunities saddened my reflections for many days. Such was my first romance.

CHAPTER II

Playtime

AT the unripe age of thirteen I entered high school. I covered my thin, stockinged legs with long trousers. I was addressed by my teachers as Mr. Merrill. The boy Rodney was officially a man. Nor did I dispute the official decree. I had had whooping cough, measles and chicken pox. I had learned reading, writing and arithmetic. I had studied history, civil government and English composition. I was prepared to study Latin and algebra. In my training as a social being I had been to dancing school for two winters. I had taken lessons on the mandolin and I had made love to a pretty woman. This last item had not been notable as an achievement—but it indicated to me a capacity for amorous adventure, although I doubted whether I should ever desire to achieve great success in this phase of life.

Lest omission should reflect upon the godliness of my parents, I should add to my qualifications for manhood that I had attended Sunday school. In religion my education had been eclectic and ineffective. As my parents were not members of any church, they had allowed me to follow my companions from year to year—so that my instruc-

tion in the Bible had been received under Methodist, Baptist and Universalist auspices. The theological distinctions in Christian faith, therefore, made no impression on me as a child and as a result have always irritated me in mature years. I obtained not the faintest understanding of the meaning of Christianity during my Sunday school studies. The story of the New Testament interested me greatly. Somehow Christ, the hero, caught my imagination, but the divine element—the philosophy of life—made no impression. My curiosity about the meaning of life was not even excited. No belief in a hereafter was generated. Indeed at this time I was desperately afraid of death—not from any dread of a specific hereafter—but because of the feeling of a black abyss of nothingness beyond the pleasant day, wherein there would be no mother—the one person whom I felt indispensable to my happiness.

Thus I entered high school a true agnostic—religiously blank—yet ethically a fairly conscientious boy, for I believed my mother's statements of right and wrong implicitly and wanted to merit her approval. My father was a stern man full of troubles which vexed his spirit. I feared him, but I did not dislike him. In fact when he was in a cheery mood I was happy with him, but always a bit fearful, as one playing with a half-tame bear.

It might seem surprising that, with my newly aroused and vivid interest in womankind, I did not find any objects of adoration in my four years' preparation for college. I think, however, that I

was too young to merit the interest of the young ladies and too conscious of my small size to play the gallant. But my inability to hold my own with my fellows did not dissuade me from playing games. Indeed, when I peer back at them, my high school days seem as one long romp.

There were hours in the gymnasium pulling weights, leaping and swinging, boxing and wrestling; there were hours of rough and tumble, scuffling and running and battling with larger boys all over the neighborhood and in and around our various homes. I have vivid recollections of broken windows and cracked glass doors, of scraped shins, torn hands and lumpy foreheads. There was baseball in spring and summer, football in the fall and skating in the winter. All these joys were to be had in the park, miles from my home. Always I seemed to be playing hookey. Always I was coming home late, pedaling along on my bicycle in desperate speed, hoping to escape punishment.

There was a narrow trunk strap with which I was beaten, when particularly guilty. The big red welts on my short, shaking legs caused my mother more pain than me—and they hurt me sufficiently. As a result mother and father decided not to use corporal punishment on my younger brother and sister, a decision which I approved, but somewhat resentfully, as coming a trifle late.

Intellectually my "college preparatory course" was blank of any achievement except that of graduating on an irreducible minimum of mental labor. How-

ever, there was one tour de force, reminiscent of my lost days of grade school glory. A prize was offered one Friday for the pupil who could recite from memory the most verses of Macaulay's Horatius. I played ball all Saturday; but Sunday I sat in front of the fire from breakfast until bedtime and, just to be sure of winning, learned the whole poem. On Monday morning when I recited the seventy stanzes—over five hundred and sixty verses—without a break, a long-forgotten thrill stirred me into new ambitions. For a week thereafter I was a person of note and in the resultant elation determined to become again a model student.

"You can work, can't you," remarked one exasperated teacher. "You see there is no excuse for your poor marks except laziness."

But the spring buds soon called me, and when the April rains ceased and the green grass of Maytime was covered with shouting boys, and the crack of the baseball bat sounded through the open windows, the books became dull things and I scampered out into the sunshine. I felt wicked very often —but nevertheless quite happy. I know my parents and teachers were well meaning in trying to make me feel wicked and my life is no such success as to prove that they were wrong. But the more I see of the narrow men and women, overeducated in books and undereducated in play, who establish joy-killing conventions and impose gloomy prohibitions upon their fellows, the more I grow to believe in play for the education of children, to lift up the joy

level of a rather sad old world. Good play is highly educative. The most backward boy at figures will learn to keep a baseball score, and a game of handball gives unforgettable demonstration that the angle of incidence equals the angle of reflection. As an education in social ethics few methods of instruction equal playing outdoor games. It is usually possible to pick out of one's business acquaintances the men who have had no training in athletics by noting their poor sportsmanship in dealing with their fellow men.

I played too much in school time. I am glad that I played too much rather than too little. I have played too much all through my life. I am glad that I have played too much rather than too little. To play too much is a sin against the abilities—a cramping of one's achievement. To play too little is a sin against the soul—a cramping of one's character. It is my faith that the work we do and leave behind counts for something—but that the character we build and carry on counts a thousand fold. I did not feel this as a boy. I had no philosophy of living. But I believe my instinct guided me in the right direction, though I may have gone too far.

CHAPTER III

A Pure Young Man

"HOW can he be so dull about anything so interesting?" exclaimed "Chuck" Dunham, as we fled from a dismal lecture on Ethics into the joyous sunshine.

It was a warm day in May during my third year of college. The campus was sprinkled with little gossiping groups. We sprawled on a sunny slope and proceeded to a topic of constant controversy between us: "Is there any abstract right and wrong?" This is a subject no one would have thought of discussing with Dunham on first acquaintance. Dunham played football. He was a beautiful raging beast on the field, leaping, twisting, tearing his way through opposition. When I tackled him in practice, hitting him hard with fifteen pounds more weight than he carried, it always hurt me far more than him. He was a ring-leader in student pranks.

In physical action he was always the full-blooded, irresponsible boy. But mentally he was a brooding pessimist, doubtful of all things good and certain of all things evil; yet eager for discussion and alert to challenge assumptions, forcing his friends either to defend their opinions or to conceal them in his presence.

The healthy boy often assumes cynicism, but true pessimism is a rarity in youth and Dunham fascinated me. At my suggestion we were rooming together this year. I hated his philosophy, but he stirred my mind and I loved his play-spirit.

"Coolidge is dull," I agreed, when we had lighted our pipes and settled down for our customary "jaw" after an Ethics lecture, "but he is right and you are wrong. There are some fundamental ideas that persist in all times and among all races. For example, murder is wrong."

"When it isn't legally approved," snapped Dunham. "A nice war murder is all right."

"Oh, there's no use going over that ground again. You won't admit my distinctions."

"Yes I will," he countered; "your distinctions prove my proposition—every right and wrong is relative."

"But I claim that there must be a goal of life—something better that we work toward, and abstract right or wrong is that which seems or does not seem to carry us forward."

"Always, the goal," jeered "Chuck," his dark face flushing and his brown eyes gleaming with combat, "the sentimental goal. Poor old life can't justify itself—so we must have an after-life—the mirage toward which we hurry along. You set up a God the Forbidder, with a table of rights and wrongs, things you must do, things you can't do. You cut yourself off from all the joys of living real emotions and so you seek your pleasure in the sentimental

emotion that you are living toward a goal. But then you revel in diluted emotion anyhow, Rod. You took Dolly Pitcher to the dance Saturday."

"What do you mean by that bright remark? That she hasn't any brains? I noticed you took Mabel Johnson."

"Exactly the distinction. Neither of us chose brains. We wanted to dance. You took Dolly, slim little lisping Dolly and you held her gently for fear she would break and you slid around the floor all evening with her, drinking skim milk emotion. Maybe Dolly let you hold her hand in the cab. You may have had nerve enough to kiss her. If you did you had a sweet little thrill and a slight taste of lip salve. Now I took Mabel, who has no brains, but, ye gods! she feels things and she isn't afraid of showing what she feels. I just swam around that dance hall with her soft supple lovingness all wrapped in my arms —and in the cab going home—did I make love to that sweet young thing? Did I? My boy, the story is not for these young ears and it would horrify the dean—but my boy, my boy, I lived, lived gorgeously all Saturday evening; and you—poor fish —you nibbled at life with pretty little Dolly."

"Oh, I won't attempt to vie with you as a Don Juan," I began loftily, but was interrupted with——

"There you go with your moral superiority. You are a pure young man, guaranteed one hundred per cent pure, the fond mother's delight. But you're twice as dangerous as I am. I won't do any harm to Mabel or any other innocent young maid. But

I'll learn my own emotions and some day I'll marry some girl, knowing enough at least to guess what kind of woman I can be faithful to—if any. But you—with your moral nature—you'll marry the first girl you get courage enough, or encouragement enough, to make love to—and then Heaven help you both!"

I recollect this talk with "Chuck" Dunham very well. It is one of those peaks of memory that loom higher and higher as one moves farther away. My moral philosophy at this time was a shapeless thing and to label my deity God the Forbidder, just when life offered the prospect of a thousand pleasing adventures, was disconcerting and gave me pause. Was it wholly illusion that a curious sixth sense seemed to register in a young brain stimulated by a stein of beer? If it were wrong to experiment with alcohol, if it were a sin in the sight of the Forbidder, then I ought not to explore further for the answer to that query. Was it wrong to make love to a woman whom one did not wish to marry—even if one could? Should all intimate knowledge of the other sex be comprehended in the knowledge of one woman? Was this a full life, this life of prohibitions, this life of being good, not by instinct, but, contrary to instinct, being good according to the rules established by others, who either knew good from having been bad—or else knew it not at all? Could I ever learn to be good, except by knowing evil myself and rejecting it?

Of course, I realized that it was not necessary to

taste all things evil in order to know enough to shun them. One could reason by analogy. One could learn to recognize the danger of fire in the nearness of heat—although probably only after suffering a few burns. But I had been taught by a Professor of Psychology that imagination could only build upon the known; that one could not imagine a thing utterly outside of his own knowledge. Could life be comprehended adequately and lived fully if a large part of one's knowledge were to be obtained second-hand?

Older people often fail to discern the intense curiosity of adolescence regarding right and wrong. Sometimes in a dormitory room, or at the fraternity house a group of a dozen boys would sit until two or three o'clock in the morning arguing questions of ethics, questions of individual and social psychology. Lessons in dead languages and ancient history remained unlearned while we battled over world old problems that were vivid and immediate, that affected our conduct of yesterday and to-morrow. Perhaps the debate would end in a physical tussle. I remember with delight the spectacle of a short muscular apostle of fatalism sitting astride a prostrate lanky exponent of free will, inside a jeering ring of debaters on the campus one moonlit night in June.

"I pummel you for your soul's sake," declaimed the victor, while we shrieked our merriment. "It was ordained that my spirit should be intolerant of

yours. Exercise your free will and conquer Fate if you can!"

The sweaty struggles of the football field taught us lessons somewhat better learned than many studied in the class rooms.

"Hit 'em hard" and "get your man," may sound like brutal instruction, but it went hand in hand with the doctrine of "play the game fair"; and failure to learn all the lesson meant humiliation and the scorn of one's fellows, the social taboo—far more effective than any written law or physical punishment.

Let me here write down my tribute to the great teacher of my college days, the clean souled "director of athletics," as he was described in the university catalogue. He was known to the newspapers as the football coach, to the students as "the old man," and to all graduates of the university who had ever come under his influence as a builder of men. He had studied for the ministry, but with a vision and an instinct for service, of extraordinary keenness, he had abandoned the lesser opportunities of the pulpit to give himself wholly to the task of training boys to be men, through the conduct of athletic sports. In his chosen work as a developer of the ideals of youth, he was the most successful man I have ever known. The faculty included men of deep learning, men of true wisdom, scholars and pioneers in the search for truth. They rendered full service for a small money reward. Some have made an impress on their generation; some will impress generations

to come. But "the old man" built character day in day out, in the plastic minds of young men—a priceless service to them and to the communities which they must influence in their mature years.

As a result of such guidance the college athletics in which I had a small part was something more than the straining struggle for championships, which the newspapers overadvertise. The restrictions of training were rigidly imposed during most of the year and voluntarily observed to a large extent during the rest of the time. I grew from a short sapling into a fairly robust young man before the end of my senior year, entitled to wear with obvious pride my college letter, and possessing a transient importance in the community. But even a star athlete, which I was not, would not be permitted to lose his sense of proportion under the old man's steadying influence. I had no idea that I was fitted for world conquest. In fact my main comfort during my last year lay in the thought that I had three years in law school ahead of me in which to prepare to earn my living.

The desirability of being able to earn my living had been impressed upon me particularly through a young woman who had occupied a large place in my thoughts ever since I had met her during my junior year. Like most western universities mine was coeducational. This condition may have many bad effects upon the exclusively masculine idea of college life, but it has at least one good effect upon the average boy. Woman as a familiar object, as a part

of everyday living, loses some of the illusory charm of the unfamiliar. Of course, youth must fall in and out of love, but the ease and variety of possibilities in a coeducational college does cultivate some sense of discrimination.

I do not believe that my attitude was exceptional and while I always noted a score or more of girls with whom I was sure I could fall madly in love, if marooned on a desert isle, the variety of charms offered somehow prevented me from surrendering completely to any one attraction. Yet I was what my mates called a "concentrator," always "rushing" some girl violently for a few weeks or months and then (usually because I met no violent interest in return) veering away to some new discovery.

But from the day when Jeannette and I collided, unintentionally, in the blinding rain; to be precise, from the twelfth day of April in the year 1895, my vague interests in woman became a definite desire to be with one woman. For a long time this desire was what a mother might call quite pure. As Dunham had said no mother need fear me. I courted Jeanette assiduously. I felt always somewhat intoxicated with the pleasure of her presence. When I was away from her I dramatized myself as an ardent wooer in a thousand different situations. But when I was with her I was completely reticent as to my amorous feelings.

Before that day in April I had observed her for weeks in a lecture course which we both attended. I was never absent from that class. I seated myself

where I could see her profile and I spent a goodly portion of the hour studying her. She built her masses of soft fine hair into a sort of golden aureole, after the fashion of the day. Her face in this helpful frame had the charm of a wild flower—not beauty—but delicate vivacity and grace. Her eyes were beautiful, more from their expression than from any quality I could analyze. They were gray green flecked with brown, a little startling in combination with corn-colored hair, but altogether attractive, alight with intelligence and humor, a trifle quizzical and mocking it seemed, whenever I caught her looking at me. Only on rare and sweet occasions did I note a ray of tenderness. Her lips were rather thin, but lithe and full of expression.

To be honest, I must add to the description of her charms that Jeannette Hull was a very shapely person. It may be that the perfection of her figure lent an attraction to her face that otherwise I should not have seen. Yet in equal honesty I doubt that, because, much as I have always appreciated beauty of form in women, I was more swayed in college days than since by the prevailing idea that a girl must be pretty as a prerequisite to all other attractions. Chuck Dunham, a severe critic, admitted that Jeannette was "easy to look at," but he described her figure with an indecent extravagance which I shall not imitate. It will be enough to quote his conclusion as amply descriptive: "She certainly is all there."

The collision in the rain occurred many weeks after Jeannette began to absorb so much of my

thought. She had come into the University after two years in a girls' school and she associated with a group of girls whom I did not know, so I had not been able to meet her in any ordinary way. But when I hurried around the corner of a building with my head down and had to retrieve her and her umbrella out of the muddy roadway into which I had flung them, it was natural that a future acquaintance should be presumed. I escorted her across the campus watchful that no other ruffian should buffet her. There was a yellow glow in the sky; it was a sullen jaundiced afternoon until I met her. It was the radiant morning of a new life as we splashed along the paths and the pelting water tingled sweetly on my face. Her amused eyes caressed me. Not since Daisy had kissed me at the barn door had I felt such an elation.

Two days later we took a long walk. I carried a volume of Browning as fitted to my mood; also to impress her with my culture. She knew that I was a football player and I hoped to please her as a dancer. But my main attack was intended to be intellectual. On our next walk she countered with Swinburne, of whom my previous knowledge was small. I found to my surprise that he expressed my exaltations better than Browning.

It was a delightful spring. We walked and boated, and drove now and then into the country behind a placid livery hack. This was before the automobile era. We talked incessantly, courteously allowing each other a fair division of time. I suspect that

she listened generously more than I. We discussed religion, society, business, men and women, even love —with a certain reserved defiance. Always our ideas were unconventional. Anything conventional was inevitably ridiculous in our sight. We refused to be sufficiently conventional to make love to each other. Yet I was certain that I was deeply in love with her, and she told me—many years too late—that she thought I was quaintly young, but was sure when I grew older she would care for me more than anyone she had ever met.

The more I saw of Jeannette as the months hurried by and graduation time drew near, the more doubtful I became of the existence of that forbidding deity I had once revered. It was no desire to sow wild oats that brought about this change. It was more the appreciation of the complexities of ethical questions, the necessity of experience for personal conviction, the determination to live fully, the growth of youthful antagonism to all conventional restraints. Indeed, far from seeking the promiscuous adventures of a life of wine, women and song, I had come to a definite resolve to maintain a quite unusual, I might almost say a priggish, purity.

It appealed to me that some day I should either marry Jeannette or some one whom I cared even more about—if that were possible. Yet I had time and time again paraded before her my scorn of the man about town, who, wearied with dissolute folly, offers his soiled and threadbare passions to a pure young girl, who would regard his offer as an insult

were it not for her innocent ignorance of what a gay life really means. I had announced my firm intention of presenting myself to my best beloved as clean in body and soul as I expected her to be. The economic factors in the relations of men and women received little consideration in my collegiate philosophy. In fact, my thoughts were just the raw and unorganized ingredients of ideas—mental food, but inedible. I was just beginning to appreciate the desirability of mixing and cooking them, but the bread and cake produced by my early efforts were highly indigestible.

Jeannette was about my age in years and hence, being a woman, was much older in wisdom. She watched my experiments in mental cookery with interest, tactfully declining to swallow the results but encouraging me to continue in my labors. She smiled a little wistfully at my resolutions of purity, but sympathized more obviously with my resentment at the commands of the Forbidder transmitted through his self-anointed spokesmen. Through our discussion we came to a common thought, somewhat dimly outlined, of the Great Builder. We tried to put fragments of history together like a broken puzzle picture and to find in it some design to make up a blue print of some part of the eternal plan.

The more we discussed the possibility of such a plan, the mistier the idea became—and yet strangely enough the more convinced we were that there was a plan.

At the end of spring, 1896, Jeannette and I made

two in a long line that passed before the president of the University. To each he gave a solemn parchment wherein the world was informed in glowing Latin that the possessor had become one of the educated elect, that he or she, the sex making no distinction, was a Bachelor of Arts. In truth I had little conception of art or of the arts in any sense in which the words may be used. During my four years in college I had learned a little about men and women, about their motives and habits and how to work with and sometimes to lead my fellows. Such social knowledge as I had I was least conscious of. Such bookish knowledge as I felt conscious of I possessed the least.

CHAPTER IV

Learning Some Laws

THE first night after I had arrived in Cambridge I drew my chair up before the log fire in my room in Oxford street, lighted a pipe, stretched out my legs and puffed rapturously at the buff-colored ceiling. At last I was a free man. Home and family, dearly beloved but imprisoning, were a thousand miles away. The petty restraints upon boyhood were gone. I was acknowledged competent to rule all the hours of my days. College had been for me a super-high school. True I had lived on the campus for the last two years, but a score of continuing obligations bound me to my family. Worst of all I had no money freedom. Now I had a fixed allowance, within which limitation desire instead of galling logic could determine extravagance or thrift.

I was free. I had registered at the Law School. I had dined in Memorial Hall. I was a full-fledged graduate student. I was entering upon the serious work of life—a definite preparation to earn my own living. I intended to work hard, to show that I merited freedom. I felt exultant. Life was about to become real and earnest.

There was a sharp knock on the door. I called: "Come in."

A slender young man with a gaunt nervous face stood in the entrance.

"My name is Halliwell," he said. "I room across the hall. Princeton '96, doing graduate work in English. Mrs. Colby said you were doing Law. I thought we'd better meet to-night instead of to-morrow morning in the bathroom. I look better in clothes."

He grinned amiably, showing a wide line of flawless teeth beneath a small mustache.

"Glad to meet you," I responded heartily. "My name is Merrill. I've just arrived from Chicago and I'm so glad to be here that everything looks good to me. I don't think I should mind your appearance in your bath."

"That's not the worst of me," said Halliwell. "I shall probably come in sometimes very drunk—not regularly, you know—but just now and then. Hope that won't shock you. I'm a serious person, but there are times when I just can't resist making a fool of myself."

"I shall be happy to assist you," I said ambiguously.

Thus began my life-long friendship with that strange genius who caused two South American wars, who destroyed a great political movement, who wrote a fairy tale for children which has no equal for spiritual and verbal beauty, and then printed a volume of poems so terrible in their stark, crude

passion that the book was forbidden the mails and the author was ostracized by almost all his friends.

Eugene Halliwell was more sincere in insincerity than any person I have ever known. He was determined to exhibit his naked soul in all that he did, resolved upon shameless candor, yet utterly unable to distinguish between a mood and a motive, between a whim and a purpose. If a night's carousing bred pessimism, he insisted on voicing his despondency and affirming it to be a conviction of his soul. The lewd sensations that men of equal honesty suppress he must shout from the housetops. He was in truth as gentle and pure a man as I have ever known, loyal and self-sacrificing by instinct. He has a world-wide notoriety as a man of debasing sensuality and utter selfishness, a treacherous poseur, who brings evil into all things he touches.

My anxious friends thought he led me astray in Law School. If so, then I was ready for someone to lead astray and at least he never cast a sneer upon a single worthy aspiration that I expressed. Yet throughout my life my good, conservative friends have sniffed and scoffed at every wholly generous, self-immolating thought that I have expressed. It has been "radical" or "impractical" in their narrow worldly view. Gene Halliwell's vision never stopped at ant heaps. He would sketch mountains into the background of the uplands of my dreams.

In Halliwell's company I met women unlike those I had ever known before or with whom I have ever associated since. I have heard them referred to as

"fallen women" by beautiful females who have married scrawny old men whom they do not love, or fat young men whom they despise. These beautiful females seldom have paid the price for which they bought comfort. They have not made their buyers happy and they have cheated in other ways. Perhaps this was why they have spoken with scorn of their sisters in the same profession, who always paid the price.

If I asserted that I kept my vows of purity amid such associations probably I should not be believed, so I will only venture this much of the truth. I found much pleasure and interest in the discovery that there is only one kind of woman, that there are no classes of good women and bad women, save as all human beings differ in value. I found cultured women and vulgarians in "questionable company" mixed in about the same proportions, as I have found them mingled in homes of unquestioned social standing. Perhaps I should make this distinction, that often in the homes of wealth I have found a larger percentage of inexcusable vulgarity.

For Halliwell's guidance through this part of my education I am grateful. He was getting bored with this phase of life and my fresh interest revived his for a time and then our joint interest waned rapidly.

"There's one comfort in our wickedness," yawned Gene one evening, after we had pleaded another engagement over the telephone and had sat down before the fire for a long "pow-wow"; "we sha'n't

have to go through this stage at the age of forty-five. My dad has a flock of business friends who make me ill. They have a three day round up on business about once a month in New York—and they do one day of business and then start out for two days of seeing the town. There are among them some bachelors who kept their noses to the grindstone all through their buck days. They're trying to make up now for what they lost. But the worst of the lot are the married men who have always lived so respectably that they have an immediate interest in the sight of any chorus girl out loose. They pride themselves on being gay old dogs and like a baldheaded, gray-haired pack of fools go loping down Broadway in full cry when a whiff of musk comes on the breeze. There ought to be a dog-catcher and a pound provided specially for that kind."

. . . . .

At the end of my first year Halliwell finished his graduate work and departed from Cambridge, reappearing for a few days in my senior year and then going out of my life for many years until he returned to join me in an adventure which has more public interest than our school-time acquaintance. I should like to dwell upon him, but this is my story and to include his would require another volume—so I will leave him only half revealed as he steps in and out of my troubled life.

But it should not be thought that philandering

with Halliwell filled all my first year in Cambridge. In fact, I studied very earnestly and I should delight to pause and sketch one by one those high-minded gentlemen of the law faculty who vividly and entertainingly inspired my interest in the scarlet and golden threads of vital issues that ran in and out through the dull stuff of the law, making a shifting pattern of human hopes and rights and passions in which I found continuous fascination.

Unworthy indeed would I have been of the instruction which I received had I not found in it my chief interest. My teachers had not merely a great story to transmit, as the singers of ancient days carried the epic poems down from generation to generation. They had more to do than to inspire me with respect for the principles of the common law. They had set themselves the task of teaching me to reason as generations of law makers had reasoned before me, so that when I went out among my fellows to tell them of the law, I would carry on into the problems of my generation the established wisdom of the past and with its aid build a superstructure for the new day that would rest fairly upon, and would be a fitting addition to the house of yesterday.

Since Harvard days I have found much cause to doubt the worth of the law makers of to-day and to criticize their work with bitterness. Indeed my fall from a great height came through what men called a defiance of the law—which was in fact only the defiance of a usurper who offended against a greater

law than that which he invoked. But I have never swerved from my early admiration for those scholars of Cambridge who devoted their lives with such patience and fervor to impregnating succeeding generations of lawyers with the principles, and inspiring them with the ideals, of English jurisprudence. Young and immature though I was, discursively curious about a thousand aspects of life, they won not only my respect and interest but my lasting affection. Langdell and Ames and Thayer and Gray—God bless them all! They are gone along the path that I some day must follow. I should feel assured of the justice of a world beyond if I knew that there the scales were weighted by those "stainless, gallant gentlemen."

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In every way my years in Cambridge were a time of growth. My mind, my imagination, my social information developed. Even my body grew in size, in variety of appetites, in capacity for sensation and valuation. I had for the first time an intense love of life—and with this came a desire to prosper so as to be able to experience life in all possible phases. An interest in public affairs was awakened. I discussed politics with my father in letters and when home during vacations. I became curious concerning his part in public affairs which gave him such positive and cynical opinions about persons of political notoriety and which provided me with railroad passes to and from school at vacation periods.

Secretiveness was not one of his characteristics so my inquiries brought forth a vast amount of entertaining and disquieting information.

Doubts had arisen in my mind concerning the infallibility of the law through the frank and vivid criticisms of unsound law with which students and faculty enlivened the lecture hours. To these doubts was added assurance of the unreliable character of the law makers and law enforcers through my father's intimate revelations of politics. Clearly there was ample opportunity in public life for a well-educated young man of virtuous ideals to do a great work—and perhaps to earn a great reward. (Youth is always sure that its ideals are virtuous.) Thus developed the last phase of the unreal world in which I, like the average American boy, was educated. I created for myself a mythical ideal of the man that I should be—a naïve creature of some spiritual beauty—enveloped in a Roman toga—thundering truths in the market place or "the applause of listening senates to command."

My visions of those days were not disturbed by any acquaintance with South Water Street on a busy day, nor were they made ridiculous through any apprehension of the pleasant manner in which the Senators of the State of Illinois receive the messages of would-be deliverers who have only words to deliver.

Yet, I repeat, during my years in the East I grew perceptibly from boyhood toward manhood. I lived still in a sheltered land, a world of myth, but I had

begun to sense that just beyond was a realm of bitter cruelties, mean drudgery and persistent stupidities, where the power I thought I possessed and the ideals I hoped to cherish would meet real tests, where success and failure would be facts. I was impatient to deal with facts.

[This chapter of Merrill's life is incomplete. There are some disconnected notes, indicating an intention to write up various incidents. A moot court argument. . . . A Harvard-Yale football game. Some trips to New York. . . . An evening with the dean of the law school. . . . Long tramps through the country are half-sketched. But these records are inadequate for reproduction. There is a letter from Jeannette Hull, which shows that she was teaching classes in English literature in a girl's school near Boston during Merrill's last year in Cambridge. Evidently they spent much of their free time together. The only manuscript of informative length which seems worth reproducing is on yellowed paper, evidently written while at Harvard and since revised. D. R.]

. . . . .

Rudolph insisted that I give a tea. It is an eastern custom that I have never been able to accommodate to my western ideas. But I wanted him to meet Jeannette and also I had received a letter from Halliwell saying that he would be here for three days. The possibility of having Jeannette meet Gene, and hear Rudolph play, converted me to the tea party and it came off this afternoon.

Gene is calling on a friendly publisher this evening in the hope of interesting him in some manuscript,

so I am going to record this meeting before I forget. Maybe Gene will marry Jeannette some day and I'll give them this manuscript for a wedding present! I can't imagine two people more suited to make each other unhappy—so they ought to fall in love. Confound Gene anyhow! I begged him to restrain that wild tongue of his. I told him Jeannette wouldn't mind; but Rudolph is a male lily, a musical ascetic who plays in so clean a spirit that he makes even the indecencies of Strauss sound pure and holy.

But Gene was in one of his most affected devilish-fellow moods and started chattering in exaggerated enthusiasm about Maudie and Nellie and Kitty and Petty Lamb!

"Remember Petty Lamb?" he shouted, "dear old Petty Lamb, of the Gay Girls Company, fourth from the end, with a hole in her stocking. Always had a hole in her stocking—and a beauty spot on her face. You asked her one night why she didn't put the beauty spot on her stocking where it would be of some use."

"I never said such a thing," I protested, "it was one of your alcoholic witticisms."

"Beg your pardon," cried Gene, "you are right as usual. Your action was far more delicate and typical. You gave her a pair of silk stockings. Remember what a time we had picking them out? The little girl at Jordan's asked you what size and you didn't know and you asked her what size she wore and she got quite peevish and called the floorwalker

who was very superior and refined in a most ungentlemanly manner."

"That must have been about the time Richard Mansfield was in town," I interjected, determined to switch the conversation with brute force, if necessary. "What a corking lecture he gave at Sanders Theatre. We sat up until four A.M. afterward arguing about Hamlet."

"Hamlet," repeated the irrepressible, "that was the name I've been trying to remember for a month. Portia Hamlet, formerly of the Kittie-Cat Chorus, last seen behind the counter at the Old Oak Dairy Lunch. I hadn't thought of her for years, the prettiest little vampire we ever met and our greatest failure. You failed at reform and I failed at seduction."

"Really, Gene," I began, somewhat wrathily——

In a moment he was courtesy incarnate.

"A thousand pardons, Miss Hull," he said, bowing most contritely—"and also Mr. Litny"—bowing with the faintest flicker of irony toward the indignant Rudolph. "I haven't seen this young reprobate for nearly two years and he was always such a moral sinner that I delight to shock him. But I did not intend to go quite so far before others, particularly before you, Miss Hull."

"You haven't injured Rodney's reputation with me," answered Jeannette with a slight but effective emphasis on my name.

"I'm so relieved," he murmured. "Mr. Litny, will you show your forgiveness by playing that nocturne

that Rod has raved about in his letters? I'm sure that will purify even the stale atmosphere I brought in with me, out of the room with the bolted door —our naughty past."

So Rudolph played and even Gene, who had a real love of music, forgot his malice; while Jeannette sat entranced. For Rudolph was the rare amateur who had mastered his piano. The mechanics imposed no limitations on his expression and the emotions of Beethoven and Chopin and Bach lived again in my little room and swayed us all, sitting there, now tense, now relaxed, each dreaming the dream in his own way, but knowing that the others shared its beauty.

Rudolph played again and again at our insistence. Then I brought in the sandwiches and cakes, and Jeannette made the tea and we gossiped on this and that and everything. But eventually Gene came around to his pet subject again. I knew he would do this, if for no other reason than to justify himself and to convince himself that he was perfectly frank and had no hypocrisies. This time, however, his mode of discussion was better chosen, although once started on the theme his conversation was a bit raw for the average palate.

"There is nothing more real and vital in life," he announced, "than the relations of men and women, particularly young people. Yet there is nothing less talked about between them, except as a delicious impropriety. For instance, I've been eating lunches in New York at a small beanery where there is a

waitress who fascinates me, just the way I suppose a snake charms a bird—if snakes really do that. I detest the girl; I despise her. But there is something about that girl's mouth that arouses in me a seething desire to kiss it. I wouldn't kiss her for a hundred dollars—well let's be reasonable—I wouldn't kiss her for five dollars—that is, when I have five dollars—I mean I couldn't put my arms around her. I tell you I dislike everything about her except that mouth. If I could amputate that mouth and put it on a nice clean girl I'd ask it to marry me to-morrow.

"Now that seems to me interesting. I wonder if other people have thoughts like that. But if I asked any of you to compare experiences with me no one of you would admit ever having anything but the most conventional emotions—and probably you wouldn't talk about them."

He looked around invitingly.

"Probably not," said Rudolph, with unusual asperity. It was plain that he disapproved of Halliwell. The "Harvard reserve" had worked deep into his Polish-German nature.

"It's more than a matter of good taste," suggested Jeannette. "If the most intimate thoughts are spread out in public they lose much of their value, their delicacy. It's like the way the skin tans and toughens in the sun and wind. I'll admit I'm curious about other people's ideas and experiences, especially in so-called sex problems. But I'm not curious enough to pay the price of exposing my own.

"However," she concluded with a little malice, "don't let that deter you from giving yourself away if it is a free giving."

"Thanks," continued Gene unabashed, "thanks for the permission. You seem to be almost broad-minded, although I should say rather stingy."

"Have you see Robinson Smith lately?" I asked abruptly; hoping to stop a flood of embarrassing self-revelation.

"Last week," he answered. "You know he's married. Has a sweet little wife, a trifle smaller than the Statue of Liberty and twice as cute. Has a fine baritone voice; the wife, I mean. I guess Robbie will sing tenor all his life now. She will prefer to carry the air; and, if she wants to, she will. I asked them why on earth they married."

"You asked them *what?*"

"I asked them why they married. I couldn't see why she would want a little thing like Robbie around the house, and I should have thought he'd never have had the nerve to ask her, though, of course, if she wanted him she may have just told him so."

"Did you explain those reasons for your questions to them?" asked Rudolph.

"Certainly," said Gene. "But they didn't give me any very good answers. Robbie said something weakly about it being no use to discuss tastes, and Mrs. Robbie said that remark didn't compliment her much. I was afraid they were going to have a row. I might have to be a witness in a divorce case if she got mad and hit him, so I changed the subject. I

talked about going soon and what a long trip I had to make to get home. That's the only time during the evening I made a hit. They discussed my going very enthusiastically. So I left."

Jeannette was frowning perplexedly.

"Do you talk like that to be amusing, Mr. Halliwell?" she asked, "or do you like to hurt people's feelings? I've been trying to understand your real motive; because despite your conversation I don't think you're a fool."

"You probably think I'm posing."

"Yes—a bit more than most of us."

"Now really I'm not. I have a tremendous amount of curiosity about life and I hate to waste time over unimportant things. Therefore, whenever I talk seriously I try to find out something that I want to know—or to tell somebody something he may want to know. Most people talk because they like to narrate. They want to occupy the stage. They keep silent and listen only the amount they think necessary to acquire a lien on another person's time, so that he will have to listen when their time comes. I try to shape conversations so that I'll be interested and not bored by what other people say.

"For example"—he paused a moment, looking at me mischievously. I braced against the coming shock. "I've a great many questions about you, Miss Hull, and my old friend Rod. You've known each other quite well for some years. From my knowledge of Rod and from what little I've seen of you I can guess that you and Rod have never asked

each other why you went around so much together. In simple words, what do you see in each other? Now if you ever discussed this you might learn a good deal."

He waved aside my protesting hand and continued:

"Really I wish you would discuss it because if you don't talk about it in cold blood, I'll tell you what will happen. Some day circumstances will be propitious and Rod will begin to make love to you without knowing whether he is in love or not. But having started out that way his conscience will get to work and he'll convince himself that he is in love with you and he may make you think you're in love with him. Of course, if you people really are in love or do honestly fall in love, it is no affair of mine. But if you aren't or don't fall in love and the event I'm afraid of comes to pass, I'll have two more good friends turned into one bad couple. That's happened to me four times in the last year. So don't say that your affections are none of my business."

I was too amused to be embarrassed by this impertinence, especially as Jeannette took it in a quizzical spirit.

To tell the truth, the advice was good. Jeannette and I had a good talk after tea. We walked all the way into Boston. On Harvard bridge we paused for a long time watching the great curve of the city, topped with the gilded dome of the capitol, gradually fade in the twilight until it lay misty and unreal across the quiet water. We decided that there

should not be any love making for some time at least; but that we were very fond of each other and that we would wait and see whether time would draw us still closer together.

She was staying that night with a friend who lived in Newbury Street a few blocks from Massachusetts Avenue. When I left her at the door of the house, we shook hands as though sealing a compact. It was the first time I had ever held her hand with any feeling of intimate interest in the contact. I pressed it quite tenderly and the small fingers that gripped mine sent a new thrill through me—not a gust of passion, but a soft, warm affectionate feeling—a strong desire to do something for her that she would like and to see her eyes smile at me.

I walked back toward Cambridge thinking many new and interesting thoughts—mostly about Jeannette. I'm going to stop scribbling now and think some more.

BOOK II

REALITY

CHAPTER V

Starting to Work

"THIS is my son Rodney," was the introduction with which my father customarily demanded, rather than requested, my admission within the pale of his business associations.

No one responded more heartily to the demand than Jack Emmet, the "Big Boy" in city politics.

"You're a bigger man than your dad," said he, "but you'll have to go some to be a better one. Living at home? Whose precinct is that? Apperson? He's too much of a statesman to run a precinct. Why not work the boy in? We can use all the bright young fellows who don't think they are too good for the game?"

"I want to get into the real game," was my answer; "I've been going to school for so many years that I think it's about time for me to do something."

"Don't worry about the time you've been to school," said Emmet, with a slightly wistful look in his narrow gray eyes. "Just so long as you don't get swell-headed it won't do you no harm. I didn't have much teaching myself, but my boy is going to Yale next year. Glad to meet you, Rodney. Follow your dad's advice. He knows what's what. And if you want a boost some day, just call on me."

He lumbered across the club dining room to another table—a short, heavy, broad-shouldered man with thin black hair brushed back from a weather-beaten face which had no distinction except in the sharp, cruel little eyes that belied the easy good nature of his manner.

"He is a good friend of mine," said my father, with some pride. "It would be a good idea for you to take hold of the precinct work. Kenney, the ward leader, is one of my clients. You could work up rapidly in the organization. A little politics is good for a young lawyer. I suppose you're a Democrat?"

"I don't know what I am. I thought I would be independent until I had some ideas. However, probably you know best. I suppose one must work with some organization. Most of my friends are Republicans; but I'm not strong for the protective tariff."

"That hasn't much to do with city politics, anyway," suggested my father dryly. "However, you do just what you want to do."

This last sentence was usually father's final argument. He would point out the way of wisdom. Then if I chose to be a fool, that was my privilege; only he wanted me to understand clearly that he had shown me what a fool I would be and of course he did not care to have his son make a fool of himself! It was always very hard for me to stand against this particular method of coercion. In my apprentice days in the law office I made no effort to resist, having decided to follow advice implicitly until I had

acquired at least convictions instead of mere doubts as to whether my father's meat would nourish or poison me.

Thus it happened that I put in many evenings in petty political work, while my days were employed with the mean detail which is unloaded on a fledgling lawyer. At the same time my spare hours were absorbed largely in trifling social affairs with relatives and friends of the family. All in all, my first year and a half of experience in being a grown man and earning my own living was a most disheartening, irritating, disillusioning period. My whole world seemed petty, uninspiring and unimportant. The only way out that I could perceive was the possibility of making enough money to permit me to get out of business, to get out of politics, to get out of the city, to live someway, somewhere, somehow dissociated from all the realities I had thought would be so interesting and had found so unutterably dull. These were the most unhappy days which I can now recollect.

With the desire for money as a means of release came also the distressing knowledge that as a money-making game the law offered very poor sport. Some boys I had known in high school who had gone into business were already far along the road to wealth. On the other hand, my own father, regarded as an exceptionally successful lawyer of twenty-five years' experience, earned only a fair income. He maintained that income only by unremitting labor through long hours, with the fear of diminishing business al-

ways goading him to additional work to acquire new clients as the older ones dropped away.

Somewhat desperately I began writing whenever I could find the time—unconvincing stories and platitudinous essays, which were returned promptly by uninterested editors. I exchanged a good many letters with college friends, a large number with Jeannette—full of fish hooks, poorly baited, with which I hoped to catch some of the appetizing brain food not found in my days of drudgery. Life was so dull that I found occasional interest in playing poker,—a dull discomforting game for anyone who had so little love of gambling. I even fell into one or two sordid adventures with women until scared away by the threatened development of one escapade into a miserable tragedy.

Then came the city election of 1901 and I found in the excitement of the campaign a new interest and for the first time comprehended the meaning and purpose of the political routine in which I had been employed. A long smouldering public anger at the street railway system flamed out under the blowing of a popular politician—the "Honorable Richard Courtney." The "Big Boy" did not like Courtney. The Honorable Dick did not trot well in harness. But Emmet never openly opposed a strong public desire; so Courtney received the Democratic nomination and started out "to clean up the traction crowd." It was generally understood in the organization that Emmet was luke-warm, but that rumor only encouraged my youthful ambition to further

efforts. If a new day were about to dawn I intended to be present at the sunrise.

As a filler-in I spoke at Courtney meetings throughout the town, usually boring a large crowd that was waiting for the headliners, or attempting vainly to hold the slim audience that remained after the stars had departed. I felt that a great battle for principle was in progress and gave unreserved support to our ticket, including all the incompetent or disreputable lesser candidates who hoped to slide into power behind the popular leader. Just before election pretty definite word came from the "Big Boy" to trade off the mayor for the small fry wherever possible. The excuse for this treachery was found in the confident predictions of the influential newspapers that Courtney would be beaten. Hence the organization leaders advised us to save all we could from the impending wreck. I went through all the way for Courtney, with bitterness in my heart but also a determination that my first big contest should find me loyal even in defeat. As a result my own precinct and others in my group were the banner precincts of my ward. Courtney won by a narrow margin. Emmet said that he was pleased with my good work, though he expressed a fear that possibly I had overworked myself. He raised his bushy eyebrows at my father when he said that.

"It's lucky for you that Courtney won," said my father afterward. "Because Emmet will wish to appear friendly to you, although he doesn't like the way you disregarded his orders. If Courtney had

lost, the 'Big Boy' wouldn't hesitate to show you his displeasure. Now don't act as though you knew this, but don't give him a chance to discipline you until he gets over being mad."

A month later I received an appointment as an assistant city attorney. This did not drop upon me from the skies. I had decided that I wanted it; friends had suggested it to Courtney and I had called on the "Big Boy" to give me the boost he had promised. I knew that he wouldn't really help me, but I could not appear to disregard him. I was learning to be practical and took some pride in landing this position, although the idea of seeking it had not occurred to me until after the election, which fact shows that I was still far from sophisticated. The first letter I wrote on the official stationery bearing my name was addressed to Jeannette. In my exuberance I was somewhat indiscreet. It was not exactly a love letter but it indicated pretty clearly that she was likely to get a love letter in the near future. I think that just then Jeannette must have been somewhat weary with teaching pampered young ladies the uses of the English language and she responded to my announcement with a letter so affectionate that it startled me into a new self-examination.

Was I really in love with Jeannette? Even if I were, was it wise for me to think of marriage when a career was just opening out before me? Would it not be better to go some distance toward financial success before I hampered myself with family

responsibility? My next letter was somewhat more discreet.

It was during this period of introspection that the public and I were equally startled by the announcement that the City Attorney had named me as his assistant in charge of the traction case, under his personal direction. Such an honor to a very young lawyer might have inflated his egotism. However, the opposition papers soon informed me that the announced onslaught on the octopus was evidently to be a sham battle, wherein Merrill as a mere tyro would be overwhelmed by the eminent lawyers of the street railway system. The City Attorney replied that he would conduct the fight personally and that he had appointed me because of the well-known sincerity of my opposition to the public utility and because of the special study which I had made of public service questions. Of course, I was more willing than the general public to swallow this plausible explanation.

After several months of extremely hard work on this case an important question came before the state court, and by good fortune the arguments were made before a judge who, though notably conservative, was an able and conscientious lawyer. The traction lawyers were trying to stop the enforcement of an ordinance of the city requiring better service. The public interest was intense. This was the first real test of the sincerity of Mayor Courtney's efforts in behalf of the people who had elected him.

After the traction lawyer had made the opening

argument the City Attorney presented the City's case from the documents which I had prepared through many days and nights of drudgery, grinding away at the law books. For two days I waited patiently for him to make the key point in our argument. There was an obscure provision in the city charter which supported our position perfectly. It had never been considered by our Supreme Court. But I had finally discovered a similar provision in the charter of a city in another state which had been construed by the Supreme Court of the United States just as we wished our law construed. The reading of this provision and the interpretation of its language by the Supreme Court was to be our irresistible counter-attack. I sat trembling with eagerness for the blow to be delivered. But the hours went by and there was no reference to Section 186. The city attorney, Mr. Calderwood, sat down. His argument was ended. The attorneys for the company arose for the final argument. I was too excited to think of the proprieties.

"Just a minute," I cried, "just a minute; there's another point." I seized my chief by the arm and tried to remind him of the forgotten point. In my agitation I talked too loud.

"Don't you remember Section 186?" I said, quite distinctly.

A newspaper man dozing in the jury box had come to life and was watching us intently. He was from *The Daily Times,* the leading anti-Courtney paper.

Calderwood frowned and pulled me over to one

side. He whispered that he had been studying that point very carefully and had finally decided that the section was not very important; also he had found a reference to a certain decision in Massachusetts concerning a similar law which he was afraid would be used to make the point a boomerang if he raised it. I was much abashed and slipped back to my chair.

But the judge had caught my words and had turned to that part of the city charter.

"Did I hear you mention Section 186, Mr. Merrill?" he inquired.

Then I was embarrassed. I half nodded to the court, but did not rise. Mr. Calderwood hesitated a moment and then made a quick decision.

"If your honor please," he said, "there is a possible application of Section 186 to the present question which Mr. Merrill has been investigating. I had intended to ask him to present the results of his special study, which I have not had an opportunity to check over myself. This slipped my mind at the last moment. With the court's permission I will ask Mr. Merrill to conclude the argument."

For the next five minutes I was too flustered to bring credit to myself or to my proposition; but then I got over my stage fright and managed to drive my point home with some force. When the opposing lawyer came forward to reply the judge delayed him with a gesture.

"Please devote your attention to Section 186," said his honor, "because it seems clear to me that

if Mr. Merrill's construction of that section is correct, there is no doubt of the city's power to pass this ordinance. Therefore, there is no use considering the other questions you have raised until this one has been disposed of."

The victory of the city followed rapidly upon this announcement. The shrewd attorneys for the company dodged and twisted for nearly an hour, but the judge harried them relentlessly. Finally, they asked for a postponement of the decision until they had time to prepare a special brief on this point. But the judge was impatient.

"No, no, gentlemen," he said, "you have asked for an injunction and all parties agreed that no action should be taken by the city while this matter was being presented to the court. When the public right appears so clear I shall not be a party to tying the hands of the public authorities any longer. The motion for an injunction will be denied. Prepare the order, Mr. Calderwood."

That evening my name was in the newspaper headlines in many forms of embarrassing publicity. One of the worst read: "Merrill Wins Traction Case—Young Assistant Saves City Attorney Calderwood from Defeat." *The Daily Times* of the next day contained a long editorial asking why Calderwood had failed to make the point upon which the city had won, and calling upon the Mayor to remove his City Attorney or else to confess that the traction fight was a fraud which had been exposed unwittingly by "a naïve young assistant city attorney

who didn't understand that he was not expected to win."

For several days I was very unhappy in the City Hall. At first I thought I should be discharged. Then I realized that Calderwood would not dare to discharge me—when I was credited with winning the case. Disgustedly I wrote out my resignation. Then I saw that that would appear as a deliberate affront to my chief. I did not know what to do. I talked it over with my father. "Just sit tight," he said, "and wait till the storm blows over. Above all things don't talk so that anyone can quote you."

"Do you think Calderwood actually intended to lose the case?" I asked, "or did someone just scare him off the point at the last minute?"

"He intended to win," replied my father, grimly, "but not right away. You see the company would win in the lower court and then the city would appeal. That way for two years or more the city would be blocked. But Calderwood would raise your point finally in the Supreme Court and win on it. Great victory for the people! Don't you see? Meanwhile the company would have got by the present trouble —and maybe there would be a new city council— more friendly than the present one. Both Calderwood and the Company would have won on their program. Now nobody has won—except the people —and most of them don't know it—or they don't care."

Father was somewhat disillusioned. He had been a "reformer" once and still bore the scars. I had

my scars to come; and when I imagined them I thought of them as "honorable scars," with anticipatory pride. Now, as I write, I wear these scars. They came according to schedule. There are more than I expected. They are somewhat disfiguring. I have not the handsome appearance of the well-known citizen of flawless conventionality. If I had to live my life over again I doubt whether the thrills of pride which I have known would seem sufficient payment for these deep, cruel, slow-healing wounds. Yet I hope that I should have the same courage to make the same fights again—the courage of youth—the courage of illusion. Without the constant challenge of youth—how error would endure! It is a wise death that takes us away when we are too disillusioned to be of service any longer.

Of course Mr. Calderwood issued a long "explanation" which convinced no one but his friends. The mayor issued a statement expressing every confidence in Calderwood. Then an improvement project favored by all the large business houses was launched by the mayor and his City Attorney. The newspapers were quietly but effectively informed that the big advertisers favored this activity of the city administration and it would be well to stop pounding the City Hall for a time.

Emmet dropped down beside me one day when I was waiting for a friend in the living room of the Democratic club.

"I've been wanting to congratulate you, my boy," he half whispered.

"What's that on? Winning the traction case?" I asked.

"Good Lord, no," he answered. "That was a blunder. But you kept your mouth shut afterward. That showed some brain. Aren't you wise to your boss, yet? No? Well, here is a tip, my boy. If you ever say I told you I'll say you're a damn liar. But you mustn't be so innocent. Don't you know that Kohler and Stein are on the traction Company pay-roll at $20,000 a year?"

"Kohler and Stein?" I repeated stupidly.

"The firm was Calderwood, Kohler and Stein, before Caldie became City Attorney. Why do you think the traction people hire the City Attorney's partners? I think he calls 'em his *former* partners. Why does the Electric Company, the Gas Company, the Telephone Company, the big stores, the big contractors, the taxi-cab companies, the hotels—why do they all suddenly rush to pay fat fees to Kohler and Stein? Get wise, my boy, get wise. You're a nice young fellow. But you've got a lot to learn. Why didn't your dad tell you?"

"Perhaps he tried to," I suggested.

I had a sick feeling somewhere inside my chest. Above all other sensations I felt conscious of having appeared the fool in the worldly eyes of my associates. Even my indignation at Calderwood did not drown my own sense of shame. This was what my father had tried to tell me one day at lunch early in my public career. I had burst into a heated defense of Calderwood, who had not only appointed

me but then had given me a chance at the biggest job in the office. Whereupon my father had voiced a few unkind truths about my rawness and self-sufficiency and about the probable future of a boy "who knew so much more in his first year than any other lawyer had been able to learn in twenty-five years." Lunch had ended in silence and gloom. We had avoided each other for some days thereafter.

Emmet rose.

"Don't worry, my boy. You got by that tight place pretty well. But the next time you see queer things happening, drop in on me—and maybe I can put you wise to what's what."

Three months later I remembered the "Big Boy's" advice. The traction question came to the front again through a case which bondholders of the company had brought in the United States Court. The principal work of preparing this fight was given to Milberry, a fat, stupid, sycophant who had had two months' experience some years before as an investigator for the United States District Attorney. Therefore, he had been designated by Calderwood as "our expert in charge of federal court litigation." I was sometimes called into conferences—and I guessed the reason one day when I heard Calderwood assuring a newspaper man that, "Merrill has *not* been taken away from traction matters. That report is not true. Merrill will be in the federal case." Clearly Calderwood did not dare to drop me. He needed me for background. But he did not intend that I should have a speaking part.

So I investigated the program which was being worked out and soon convinced myself that the new case was simply a way devised to relieve the street railway company of the burden of the ordinance which I had persuaded the State court to uphold, and which Calderwood was rigorously enforcing—in the newspapers. Then came the question: Should I stand by and say nothing or should I try to stop the betrayal? I thought of the "Big Boy's" offer of advice. But I knew what that advice would be. I had learned a good deal about the "Big Boy." Unless he had some cunning plan for his own benefit and wanted to use me as a club, he would tell me to keep quiet. Then he would slip around to the traction crowd and tell them that he had stopped me from making trouble.

Nor did I care for my father's cynical wisdom. I felt that it was time for a big decision. Was I going to "play the game" as the successful politicians played it, never allowing public interest to interfere with private advantage; or was I going to refuse to play that game unless I could square it with my idea of what public service should be? If I refused to play that game, was there any other game I could play more decently—and achieve any personal success? I was far from sure that my ideals were at all practical. And I did want to be practical. To be sneered at as an "impractical theorist" hurt me more at that time than any other condemnation.

In the midst of my perplexity there came a piece of luck. Jeannette wrote me that she was coming

west to spend a week's holiday with an old schoolmate. I telegraphed her promptly to save at least three evenings for me. She wired back: "Yours as always." Again I felt a bit disconcerted by the readiness of her response, yet quite pleased. It would be so good to see her again and tell her about my great problem—a real problem of the real world.

. . . . .

We were sitting at a little table in a popular restaurant. The pink glow of a small lamp harmonized with my spirit. I had forgotten how lovely Jeannette was. Thinking of her for so long as a schoolteacher and an old friend, the memory of her physical attractions had been clouded over. I had imagined that her only appeal to me was as an interesting companion—one who might be a pleasing and helpful wife but who would not inspire an unreasoning passion that would lead me rashly into intimacy. From the standpoint of the male hunter in contest with the female huntress I had felt safe.

But in her immediate presence I suddenly became conscious of a desire and a fear—a desire to capture her, anxiously mixed with a fear that she might capture me! Ever since I had greeted her at the home of her hostess I had felt awkward, eager and constrained. She, on the contrary, appeared completely at ease and altogether charming.

"Tell me how you enjoy the affairs of state," she suggested.

"I'm thinking of resigning," I answered, and then

told her about Calderwood and the latest move of the traction company, and my perplexity. She listened with obvious interest. I did not disguise the heroism of the action I contemplated. I think I may have overemphasized it. I expected that she would advise my martyrdom. Then I was prepared to point out its hard consequences from the careful viewpoint of a practical man of affairs.

But she promptly presented the practical arguments against my sacrifice of official position and its ample compensation. As a result I was forced to support the more romantic program with an enthusiasm which I had not possessed at the outset of the discussion.

"I have learned," she said, a little sadly, "that we don't live in a world of good and bad people and it is hard to classify most acts as good or bad. You may do a wholly good act—yet perhaps destroy your possibility of doing even better acts. All the people you respect will not approve of you whatever you do. I think you should apply your force wherever you can be most effective."

"But if I always take orders, regardless of what I think right, would you respect me?"

"It's a matter of degree, I guess," she answered with that little weary note sounding in her voice. "Of course you must not do anything really wrong. But is silence—accepting the directions of your chief —is that wrong?"

"I think it is."

Her opposition had hastened my decision. I have

since suspected that she knew it would. Like most older men I think I know more about women now than I did years ago. But I have a guilty suspicion also that they know much more about me. Youth is a bit mysterious but the man of settled habits is as obvious as he is dull. Jeannette suspected my desire to declare myself—to challenge my elders and to compel them to recognize me as an independent force.

"I have decided to resign," I announced, firmly, although a delicious touch of fear stirred me as I spoke. She shifted to my mood at once.

"Then if you are going to fight," she said, "please fight hard. I hate to see men just resign as though they had given up the struggle."

"I'm going to leave like a thirteen-inch shell," I answered, "with a big back-kick to let them know that I am on my way."

For a while we talked about my future, romancing pleasantly. Gradually it seemed to become our future which I found myself discussing. Jeannette's eyes encouraged me with amused and sympathetic interest. Her mouth was very sweet and tender. I became solicitous about her present days, full of small and thankless tasks. I began to plan secretly how I might bring about a change. Then came a cooling thought. Did I want to help her, above all other things? Was that my life ambition? The ardent interest faded in my voice. Jeannette's color lost its brightness. There were tired lines under her eyes. She looked discontented, even a trifle fretful.

Once more our hands had approached, the fingers had touched, but somehow they did not clasp. We were very fond of each other. But we were not lovers.

. . . . .

My resignation was a forty-eight hour sensation. The opposition papers made the most of it. But Mayor Courtney stood by his appointee and referred to my action as "the outburst of a young lawyer deceived by public applause into believing that his judgment is superior to that of the eminent and experienced head of the city law department."

The head of the local bar association gave out an interview affirming the complete confidence of his brother lawyers in the integrity and ability of Mr. Calderwood. I sent to the newspapers a vicious and sarcastic reply to this interview, pointing out that the president of the bar association had been representing local public utilities for fifteen years and naturally he and his clients approved of Mr. Calderwood. But, I asked, did not this testimonial help to prove my case? The only publicity given to this statement of mine was the following sentence which appeared in three newspapers—"Rodney Merrill, former assistant city attorney, issued a long statement yesterday attacking officials of the bar association who have supported City Attorney Calderwood in his recent controversy with his obstreperous assistant."

"Better quit it," said my father, whose parental

feeling had brought him unexpectedly to my support. "Now that that crooked bunch has got over its surprise they'll block you at every turn."

He was right. They did. Inside a few weeks I observed with some humiliation that a considerable public opinion had been cunningly created wherein I was catalogued as a somewhat radical, quite unpractical young man whose egotism and desire for self-advertisement had carried him into active disloyalty to his political benefactor.

It is hard to convince the exploited voters that anyone on a public payroll really desires to render public service. But sad-eyed plodders who would welcome catastrophe and even contemplate crime "to get their names in the paper," will readily assume that a public official will risk even his beloved job to be a headliner for an hour. "He likes to advertise," brings the wisest nods from those who yearn most hopelessly for one moment in the spotlight.

After hearing a good deal of comment of this sort concerning my day of notoriety I was eager to retire into the peaceful obscurity of private practice. I ceased efforts to justify my conduct or to save the public from its officially-chosen friends.

CHAPTER VI

Plodding and Dreaming

IT is nearly six months since I left the City Hall and rejoined my father in the old offices of Merrill and Merrill. Business has been brisk and I have made more money than if I had retained my public office. I have not been unhappy but I must admit that a lifetime of such months would be a dreary prospect. Have I done anything worth while? I doubt it. But with my doubt comes a much harder question: What can I do that is worth while?

Most of my time has been spent in closing up the Girling estate. Mrs. Girling is pleased with everything except the inheritance tax and our bill. She has finally admitted that I couldn't prevent the tax —after a long suspicious period of sly investigation to find out whether some smarter attorney could not have saved her from this loss. But she is still fixed in her opinion that we are little better than highway robbers in our demand for fees. Theoretically she may be right. But practically we asked for less than our just dues, according to prevailing standards.

Mrs. Girling's money comes from her dead husband's steel mill. He could buy the work of a strong man for one year—twelve hours a day of heavy life-

destroying labor—for less than a thousand dollars. So when I charge five thousand dollars for part of a few months of comfortable effort I don't wonder that Mrs. Girling thinks I am a polite thief. I gently pointed out, with casual immodesty, that she was employing brains, the fees for which are higher than the wages of brawn. I cited as evidence her husband's profits. She looked at me with the pitying contempt of a well-done old woman for the conceit of a raw young man and said:

"I see more gall than brains in that bill. Do you think I'd ever recommend a lawyer who made such charges, to any friend of mine?"

"We saved you Ten Thousand in the Simpson deal," I suggested.

"You mean you didn't lose me more than Five Thousand," she countered.

In the end she agreed to pay in installments and went forth to advertise us as "terrible chargers—but really very clever men."

Of course we could hardly ask for a better recommendation to a "high-grade clientele" but somehow the whole business sickened me.

Old man Girling was a robber but he did make steel. He was a slave driver but he made his slaves produce useful things—bridges, sky-scrapers, railroads,—machinery of modern life. We lawyers—how little we build—how much we destroy; and always we are charging "fees for services." Whom or what do we serve? I wish I felt sure that I am serving any good purpose,—a little dream at the end

of the day's work, of something done or to be done tomorrow—that may seem worth while—to God.

Yes, I'm worrying about God again—not about The Forbidder—but about The Builder. Am I building anything? If not I have a feeling that I am wrong. I wrote a long letter to Jeannette about this. I'm not afraid of punishment—in the old Hell sense—but I don't want to waste my life. I think there must be some reason for my being. There is nothing in this legal business which seems to me worth the cost to mother of the pain and sacrifice she underwent to produce a man. My pay comes out of the aching arms and legs, the tired backs, of such as Girling's "hunkies." Do I add anything to life equal to that cost?

. . . . .

Jeannette writes me——

"You are becoming too introspective again, Rodney. It is unhealthy to spend too much time asking, why. We will never answer the question. I don't know why I should teach my girls the things I've learned. But there is a terrible *must* in living. We must carry on. We breed our kind and teach the young the half-truths we were taught and so the world goes on—— And why? We don't know. We only know we must. The law of our being is motion. Fortunately most of us must earn food and clothes and shelter—and we cannot spend much time in thinking.

"If I were not a spinster, presumably engaged in husband hunting, I should tell you that you need more responsibility. You are a little too free from burdens—for the moment too much your own master. If you had a wife—and children

—you would accept your job in life as a fact and not find much time to discuss its theory. However, being a bachelor maid, I shall refrain modestly from further discussion of the marital road out of your perplexities."

Dear old Jeannette! Of course she isn't old—she is a wise young woman. I love to get her letters. I wish I could talk with her quite often—not every morning at breakfast, but two or three evenings during the week. At times I want to go and put my arms around her and call her an "old dear" and hear her say "you funny boy." But I don't yearn to do this. I don't feel that life is incomplete without her. I don't want to wrap my life in hers, or hers in mine. I only want her for part of my life and that relationship is impossible.

A few nights ago I told Mary about Jeannette. Mary is somewhat critical. She admires Jeannette's independence and her intelligence but she thinks a woman's natural career is in home-making. Mary has been brought up to be a home-maker.

It seems strange that I have not written anything before about Mary, because I have known her quite intimately for a year or more. Her father, Christopher Belknap, is one of our best clients, not so wealthy that my attentions to Mary should be regarded as fortune hunting, but sufficiently well-off so that my father's worldly judgment has approved my apparent interest in Belknap's only daughter.

Mary is a very attractive young woman of medium height and well rounded figure. She wears all clothes

well, but looks her best in evening gowns. The first time I met her—at a dance—I thought she was the most adorable girl I had ever looked upon—with her shimmering reddish brown hair, her exceptionally deep blue eyes and, most of all, her expression of happiness—a radiant joy of living that quickened the spirits of all about her. For that evening I was quite bowled over. Indeed I was completely enchanted several weeks during which I persistently labored to establish myself in the position of most favored suitor in a considerable group of young men all bent on that accomplishment.

With success, however, the thrill of the achievement suddenly faded. Somehow the Mary whom I held in my arms for our first parting kiss was not just the Mary of my dreams. There was a somewhat unexpected flavor of passion in that caress, that was not distasteful, but also there was a lack of something that I had anticipated. Perhaps it was a certain spiritual—I almost said intellectual—elation, that I had sought and had not found. In all honesty I'm such a fool in my hopes of what a woman can mean to a man, or a man to a woman, that I suppose I never shall be satisfied. I'm sure at any rate that no woman ought to be satisfied with me.

I walked home from Mary's house feeling like a cad. I really meant all the things I had said, and felt all the feelings I had described. (How a man loves to tell a woman just how he feels! Is she as interested as she seems—or isn't she much more interested in how she feels?) Yet under all my

glowing words a queer cool little thought was running in my mind—about Jeannette. I felt sure that if it had been Jeannette that I had held so close I should have been much less incoherent—much less disturbed—physically far more calm—and yet it seemed to me that my brain would have been racing at higher speed, that my mental exaltation would have carried me far above the clouds wherein I floated with Mary.

In all these years I have never made love to Jeannette, except at arm's length. Sometimes my letters have gone rather far. I've never had any maddening desire to snatch her away from all other men and lock her in my arms as the joy of joys, worth any cost. Yet she is fair to look upon and easily stirs men pulses. I've always felt as though it would be very sweet to know that she really cared for me beyond all others—and yet—here's Mary, whom I can consider quite calmly in absence, far more calmly than I can appraise Jeannette—but when I see Mary I always want to run away with her, away from all the others, to some favoring obscurity where I can crush her yielding body against mine and feel her soft cool arms around my neck. I want to make love to her. I want her to make love to me. She answers all my questions as to why I want to be in love. With her I know why.

Yet . . . always I find myself asking, would love with Jeannette be nearer to pure joy—perhaps a higher, thinner note, not so rich and full—but with a thrill almost of pain in its fine intensity?

Mary and I are tacitly, not formally, engaged. She is not a coquette and I'm no philanderer. There cannot be another for either of us while we talk and act as we do in regard to each other. But I have a strong feeling that I have no business marrying Mary, at least not before I have made love to Jeannette and know more about her, and myself, than I know at present. How can I do that now? Yes, I am a fool. I should have made love to Jeannette long ago, and then I should know. But should I? Probably I should have insisted on marrying Jeannette and if she would have had me we would be married now. Then if I had met Mary, or some other Mary, to heat my blood into this madness, what would have happened?

One young delusion has left me. It is not the "pure young man" who is the ideal mate—I mean the ultra pure, who has never known the giddy spell of a common passion. May a kindly Fate save all women, and all men, from marrying the first, or the second, or the third love. Out of many loves may come a lover. I am just beginning to realize that I have loved, not too many, but far too few. But I can't explain this to Mary. Mary has been adored by a host—but she, herself? Perhaps she is not wholly frank—she does not kiss like an amateur. She sometimes speaks of that Captain who hung around her last winter—the man had a rotten reputation—I'm surprised that father Belknap let him come to the house. Sometimes her eyes are a bit dreamy, almost wistful it seems to my jealous gaze,

when she speaks of him. She says he was misunderstood, he had a very sweet side to him. I hate his suave manners! When I meet him in the club he always wants to be remembered to Miss Belknap.

Really I must see Jeannette—although, of course, it's too late. I couldn't make love to her now even if she would let me. She has heard about Mary. I wrote her that I might be coming east soon. She answered by saying she would be glad to see me, but perhaps I was planning a honeymoon and, naturally, even old friends wouldn't expect to be favored with a call.

CHAPTER VII

Moonlight

IT won't do any good to call myself names. Anyhow I didn't act deliberately. Pettigrew telegraphed that I must meet him in Boston or the new company would be captured by the enemy; so I had to go. Then I was forced to wait Saturday and Sunday with nothing to do while Pettigrew went back to Portland to talk to our big stockholders. I telephoned Jeannette and she said she could spend the week-end with an old friend in Cambridge. I took Pettigrew's car, which he had entrusted to me in ignorance of my incompetence as a driver, and Jeannette and I spent two glorious days driving all over that dear familiar countryside around Boston. Any man or woman with a dash of romance in the blood would have been affected by the situation.

It seemed that time had turned backward. I was once again in Law School and Jeannette had just come east to begin teaching. We were again an avid boy and a dancing girl exploring the roads to happiness that wound in and out through the Massachusetts hills. It was late in the fall and in the Saturday afternoon dusk we climbed the well-known road to Bald Pate, speculating on whether the Inn had closed for the season. A single light in the

rambling old building cheered us as we topped the ascent.

"Just closing up for the year," said the stout old lady we met at the door. "But I guess John and I can get you a bit of supper."

The fact is, that in half an hour they served us a meal of surprising quality. In the dimly lighted living room in front of a great log fire they set a little table and on the shining linen appeared, in delft blue china, cold chicken, fried potatoes, a mysterious, delicious salad, hot biscuits and jelly, and coffee with thick yellow cream. At the last came a mince pie of the kind that mother would have yearned to make. When we had signified the impossibility of eating any more, despite urgent offers of more coffee or biscuits or pie, our cordial hosts cleared away the table, told us to make ourselves comfortable and stay as long as we liked—and retired to the distant kitchen.

I drew up a little divan in front of the fire, lighted my pipe and then we talked. Real talk is after all one of the greatest joys of life. Each wanted to talk and each wanted to hear what the other had to say—an unusually fair arrangement. She told her trials and disappointments and I told mine. Then we pictured our dreams and our hopes. We drew together almost insensibly as our ideas enmeshed. My arm across her shoulders tightened as confidence grew more intimate. She felt more frail than I remembered from the dances of yesterday. A surge of pity swept through me. She was so brave and

cheery in her struggle for independence. She protested that she didn't really want independence. The revelation came with a rush of words and a few tears. People thought she liked to be free and self-willed. She yearned for a proud dependence. She had no illusion as to her destiny. It was no solitary triumph—her solitude meant loneliness on the road and failure at the end.

" 'He travels the fastest who travels alone,' " she quoted. "That wasn't written by a woman."

"A man may travel faster," I suggested. "But it's usually a case of—'I don't know where I'm going but I'm on my way.' "

My right hand had found her two hands clasped together. My left drew her head down on my shoulder. A little laugh bubbled up from hidden tears.

"I felt so tired yesterday—I'm so comfy now," she said, with an almost imperceptible snuggle into my arm.

. . . . .

There was no sound except the crackle of the fire. There was no world except the darkened room—the firelight—Jeannette and I. As I bent down, her drooping lids lifted in a glance of half-surprise and half-expectancy. Then her lips met mine, unhesitant and generous, and I held her long and close. It seemed that somewhere I heard a song—a song of joy—that would last while we two clung together—and I wanted it to last forever——

Then I was kneeling on the floor. Somehow I felt I must explain.

"I've waited so long," I said.

"But why?" she whispered. "Tell me, Rodney, why?"

"I don't know," was all I could answer, but I covered her hands with kisses.

She stood up.

"The moon is shining and the view must be wonderful."

We wandered out on the long veranda, moving slowly with our arms about each other. Before us lay miles of woodland and fields—great dark patches and pools of light under the full moon. Here and there a yellow flicker showed that there were homes and living people. But we didn't want them in our world.

"If we came into this world to know such happiness," I began——

"Then why should there be any to-morrow?" she finished.

"If this isn't the end and aim of life then why should we know such joy?"

I resented each little yellow light that reminded me of a world of drudgery.

"Perhaps," she answered; "perhaps to give us courage to go through."

"To go through—to what end?" I persisted.

"It must be beyond our dreaming."

"Why is it that I feel as though I should like to die in such a moment as this before the spell can

break, as though I might then go on from joy to greater joy. Is it cowardice? Do I dread to pay the price? Do I want to shirk life—or is it instinct to follow the light while it lasts?"

"It's your imagination, dear," she whispered, "the spirit that leaps out of your body—out of to-day—over the hills, across the centuries—turns back from the to-morrows and beckons you on. Our slow moving feet have no wings."

"Then we'll stand on the magic carpet to-night and fly away to to-morrow and to-morrow."

We drew still closer and there was no room for even words between us.

Suddenly she wept, at first quietly, then with great sobs that shook her in my arms while I tried with stupid, broken phrases to comfort her.

And then she smiled.

"It's because I'm so happy," she explained. "When *you* are happy *you* worry about to-morrow, and *I* cry because of yesterday."

"Yes I hate to think how unhappy I *may* be——"

"And I hate to think how unhappy *I have been.*"

It must have been nearly midnight when I heard the man, John, coming up the steps at the end of the veranda.

"You must excuse us for keeping you up," I called out to him. "I had forgotten that you might be waiting. It is such a gorgeous night and these porch chairs are so comfortable."

"Oh I don't mind," he said, slowly lumbering toward us. "I had a sight of chores to do. Didn't

know but you and the missus maybe wanted to put up for the night. Guess we could manage somehow."

I would say that according to his lights he was a very tactful old gentleman.

"No, no thank you," I answered hastily, "we should have started home before this. We've quite a drive ahead of us. I wonder if you have any extra gasoline. I may be a bit low."

"I can let you have a few gallons, I guess," he said—and we followed him down the steps and out of cloudland.

. . . . .

There was a gray light in the east as I drove up Brattle Street to the home of Jeannette's kind and indulgent hostess—who had given her a key and remarked gayly, and wisely, "I shan't be sitting up for you, even if you come in before twelve."

It was daylight as I crossed Harvard bridge—alone. The air was cold and wet with the rising fog, but my blood was racing and my spirit still soared. Oh, night of nights! That long, long road that ended all too soon! That tousled head that pressed against my shoulder and the shining eyes that pretended surprise when I stopped on the little bridges over sparkling waters and insisted on one more good-night kiss before she fell asleep——. And since she never did fall asleep there were a great many pauses before we reached Harvard Square.

CHAPTER VIII

Fog

THE persistent telephone bell woke me.

"You asked me to call you," she said. "It is nearly noon."

"Oh yes, thank you," I answered, fumbling with my thoughts. "Have you had breakfast?"

"Long ago, poor sleepy-head."

Her voice had a strange note in it—a touch of laughter—and of fear. I became sufficiently awake to realize that my greeting must have contrasted poorly with my parting whispers of a few hours before.

"Will you be ready to start if I call for you in an hour, dear?" I ventured, clumsily.

"Oh, not in an hour, dear," she answered with light mockery. "I'm all ready now, but I shall die if I wait another whole hour."

"You old darling," I said, "I'm only half awake. After I come out of the shower wide-awake, I won't even think of stopping for breakfast. I'll be at your door in thirty-seven and one-half minutes. I'm on my way already. Good-bye."

I drove up ahead of schedule but she was standing on the steps—and looking twice as lovely as my thought had pictured her.

"Confound you!" I protested, as she slipped into the seat beside me, "if you had waited until I rang the bell, I could have kissed you in the hall, and now I may have to wait twenty miles."

"Maybe longer than that," she retorted. "I think that I did very wrong last night to let an engaged man make love to me."

Her lips were laughing, but her eyes were watching me.

"I told you that I was not engaged. I told you honestly that I was very fond of Mary and I also told you that I didn't feel toward her as I thought a man ought to feel toward the woman he was going to marry."

"You don't feel toward her the way you feel toward me?" she inquired quizzically.

"Is that a proposal?" I demanded, slowing down the car. "Because if it is, I warn you that I may throw myself into your arms right before all these people."

"Horrors, no!" she cried. "Drive on. I didn't know you could be so nasty before breakfast. I wouldn't have you now as a gift."

We kept away from that dangerous subject until late in the evening. All afternoon we drove north, away from Boston and its far-flung suburbs. By nightfall we had found unfrequented roads. We loafed along, now chatting about inconsequential things, now biting deep into some real problem of daily living, sometimes consciously abstract in our talk, sometimes intentionally personal in applying our thoughts to each other.

But whenever I drew close to that inner self that she had unveiled to me so freely in the early hours of this same day—somehow she drew away. Our lips met now and then, but it was the kiss of boy and girl, the kiss of comradeship, with only a faint flavor, not even a half-promise, of something more. I was eager to reassert the mood of the preceding night, and yet content to wait, unwilling to risk even a momentary hesitation from her who had come to my arms with a love that seemed all gift and no demand.

About eight o'clock we ran into a village where we found a little crumbling hotel that looked as though it might have been a tavern in the days of the revolution. A spare and dismal female agreed to furnish us food and ushered us into a dingy dining room, lit by one oil lamp, which was fortified by a tin reflector. In our expectant mood the surroundings lightened our spirits instead of depressing them. I think each of us felt on the brink of revelation—and what is so cheering as the hope of self-revelation to a favoring audience?

To our surprise the mournful hostess eventually returned to us with two small and quite tender steaks, garnished with sizzling potatoes and accompanied by some lonesome sliced tomatoes. Bread and butter were beyond criticism and the coffee was fresh made, while the apple pie upheld the best New England traditions. On our departure we were favored with a thin, but evidently genuine, smile of pleasure at our enthusiastic gratitude.

A fog was drifting in from the ocean and, as we drove easterly, into the marshy country, the road became a mysterious highway into an uninhabited land, while from far away we heard the murmur of the sea. We tasted its briny flavor on our lips. A vague moonlight showed us now and then wide stretches of barren plain through openings in the woodlands that flanked the roadway. Before long we had left the trees behind and the fog grew heavier. I drove slowly. The lights of the car revealed only a few feet of deeply rutted road. At intervals the groaning note of a bell-buoy sounded faintly above the increasing noise of the sea.

"I don't know where we are going," I said, "but it's like life—a little light here for you and me in our brief hour—darkness and mystery all around."

"Except that we can go back if we lose our way," she whispered. "In life you can't go back. You must find some way to go on."

"Then we'll make it life," I answered. "We'll find some way to go on."

"I wonder," she said.

I stopped the car.

"What is the use evading?" I burst forth, unable to restrain my insistent feelings. "The question is, do we want to go on? If you do we will find the way. I can't help it, Jeannette. I've tried to be a reasoning being—but I'm not. I can't think it through. I only know what I want—and I want to have you."

For a moment I overwhelmed her with my desire

for her arms, her lips, her cheek against mine, her moist hair tingling across my forehead.

"But, Rodney." She finally stopped my eager mouth with her hand. "There is that same 'but' again. Last night you said you had waited so long, and to-night you say you can't help it. Why did you wait and why do you want to help it? Something holds you back from the full giving. You want something from me—but you don't want to give."

"Yes, yes I do. I want to give you everything. I want to make you happy. I want to see your eyes shine. *But* a thousand ancestors have given me a thousand fool ideas of what is good and wise and right—and I want to do what is good and wise and right—and I can't see clearly and when I start to go ahead on a great decision a lot of these fool inherited ideas tell me to go ahead and a lot of them tell me to hold back. It's all those rotten ancestors who bother me. All that I am to-day wants you. All that I know to-night is that I am a wanting man and you are the dearest, most wonderful woman I've ever known—and I don't want to lose you to-morrow."

"But to-morrow," she insisted, "your ancestors will come back in the daylight and tell you that you don't really care nearly as much for me as you thought."

"No that isn't it." I was on the defensive. Suddenly I had an inspiration.

"It isn't my ancestors after all, Jeannette. I see it now. I was all wrong. It's you. You don't

know. You don't know whether I am the man or not. You don't call for me. You're not sure you want me. If you wanted me you would take me. I'm the humbler creature, like every man who is really in love. And you are the woman, the woman who always decides. Confess it now. You are my uncertainty. You don't know."

"No, I don't know," she confessed. "And yet, I feel that it isn't that I don't know what I want. But I don't want any man who has any doubt as to what he wants. So we come back to your doubts at the end, my dear."

"Oh, now, 'I am the doubter and the doubt.' Why should I try to match words with you? Brute force is my best argument and the only one you really respect."

For a moment she protested, and then again, as in the firelit room at Baldpate Inn, she relaxed and came into my arms with a passionate tenderness that thrilled me through and through. The fog rolled around us—the breaking seas thundered in our ears —and clinging together we floated away, tempest driven—lost to all the world—and madly happy.

She shivered.

"Are you cold, dear?"

"Not cold," she whispered. "I think I'm a little afraid. The fog, the sound of the breakers—I feel as though I were drifting too far out to sea. We must go back."

"Oh, not so soon."

"It's a long way home, dear boy. Don't forget

that I must take a train at six-thirty in the morning —back to school."

Her voice broke a trifle. She released herself and began rearranging her hair.

"I don't want you to go back to that school," I began——

"Let's talk about that on the way home. Really I'm just a little frightened in this lonesome place— and with such a strange rough man"—her eyes twinkled—"instead of that nice boy Rodney who was always such a safe playfellow, until yesterday."

We were a long time finding our way back to the Boston Road. When we were finally rolling along the familiar way somehow we began to talk of the past instead of the future. We reviewed all our old times together, the long walks, the football games, the dances, the theater parties, of my Law School days. I realized with a shock as we crossed Harvard Bridge that nothing had been said about to-morrow —the to-morrow that I had sketched in disjointed phrases as I held her in my arms—and told her how I had dreamed and hoped and yet never dared to believe that she and I—would plan—each for the other and with the other—always—together.

I started to protest. I could not drive her directly home. We had too much to say, too much that must be said—to-night.

"No, not to-night," she said. "Please, Rodney, please. You must let me think. We have turned a sharp corner, very suddenly. Don't make me hurry on."

"But you are going back to-morrow morning."

"This morning," she smiled, pointing to the big white dial on the tower, which registered one o'clock.

"But I must go back to Chicago just as soon as my work is done. I can't go back without seeing you again."

"You must," she answered. "It is better that way. Please don't even telephone before you go. We'll say good-bye to-night and then we will go away from each other for a while and try to think. We are both a little crazy just now, you know."

"If this is being crazy, I don't want to be sane again," I insisted. "Let's stay crazy."

"We can't," she said. "I know it to-night and you'll know it to-morrow. But don't misunderstand me, dear. Didn't I tell you that I loved you?"

"I believe you did."

"Then remember this: I meant it—and I always shall. No. No. Don't—not just now—I can't stand it——. Not until we say good-bye. But remember: I meant it—and I always shall."

. . . . .

It was not until Thursday morning that I reached Chicago. In a heap of collected mail on my desk was a square blue envelope that I seized at once. Did it contain the solution of my problem? All the long day of the journey I had sat staring out of the window into a hidden future. At night I had lain awake for hours in my berth. Finally it seemed that

half an answer came to my great question. Not a very heroic answer—yet it seemed the right one.

The full answer would come from Jeannette—not from me. That was my solution. Perhaps it was in this blue envelope. I had tried to face my questions honestly—not as a practical man making a mean effort to calculate worldly advantage—not as a romantic boy foolishly playing fairyland in everyday life. But honestly I had sought to measure our chances of growth as a man and as a woman—together. Would each help or hinder the other? In every mental way I felt sure that Jeannette would stimulate and encourage me—lift up my aspirations and keep my mind alert. It was a craving for that aid which I felt most satisfied even in a passionate caress. And my doubting, my perplexity with life—she would share that—at first a pleasant and then a discomforting thought. Wasn't that a lack she had found in me? She had said: "I don't want a man who has any doubt as to what he wants." Her questioning spirit sought a self-confident mate. My friends thought me opinionated, too self-reliant—but her insight went deeper. She found me wanting.

Perhaps that was why I felt so comfortable with Mary. Life was a much simpler thing to Mary than to Jeannette. Mary's God had arranged for churches, where Mary could go and hear divine wisdom conveyed to her in ordinary human words through regularly ordained preachers to whom had been revealed eternal truth. In this way Mary was provided with neat answers to all questionings as

to good or evil. She always knew which way was forward and which way was back. But Jeannette and I were always puzzled and uncertain. Our God was reticent, evasive—not unreal, but always unrealized—yet not comfortably remote, but very near and most disturbing. I might say without irreverence that Jeannette and I felt that we must take care of our God—but Mary's God took care of her.

I had done a good deal of thinking about children. When I imagined a home with Jeannette the thought of children seemed an intrusion. Jeannette herself seemed so much more important than any child. I did not like to think of any sacrifice of her and her life for children. Her individual development would be more important than the development of a family. Toward Mary my attitude was different. Mary's accepted destiny was motherhood. What an ideal mother she would be—just, patient, loving and assured in her simple wisdom.

Out of all my guessing and dreaming had come my half answer: The woman knows. Her instinct is truer. Jeannette knows whether she wants me. I doubt if Mary wants any one man. She only wants a certain kind of man—just as I want a certain kind of woman—like Mary—for a certain kind of life—the conventional kind of life, which may be the wisest kind of life for me. With Jeannette life will be more of an adventure—a greater hazard—more likelihood of failure and the chance of a greater success.

I opened the blue envelope—in hope, and in fear. This is what she wrote:

"My dear, dear Rodney—you may never understand this poor effort of mine but do believe that I mean exactly what I am going to say and that I shall do what I am going to do feeling certain that it is best for you and best for me. I have decided to marry Jim. You didn't know there was any Jim, which was unfair of me because you told me a little, not very frankly, about Mary. I, too, had my doubts. You and I have been such good friends so long—you have been, and always will be, so dear to me—that it seemed as though I could not marry Jim and never know what it would mean to feel your arms around me, never know but that if you had come to me some day and told me that you loved me I should have known a joy greater than any other joy in life.

"Into the very depth of my uncertainty came your voice over the telephone. You may think I encouraged you to make love to me, those two wonderful days. Perhaps I did. I tried not to do so. But oh, I wanted so to know. And now, am I disillusioned? Not at all. You are not a clever lover, dear, as my small experience goes—but I'll whisper in your ear that you are the sweetest, tenderest lover I shall ever know. Now I know that I have always loved you and I always shall. But I am going to marry Jim.

"You and I are not good medicine for each other, dear, at least not yet—and 'not yet' means the same as 'never.' We both need a steadying mate. We would wear each other down, each of us bent on self-assertion, each fighting to preserve an individuality in a world of commonplace. You were right in your doubt and I had my doubt too—I'll confess it.

"Jim has no doubts. He's a mining engineer. He'll pack me up and carry me around the world with him, never

questioning but that it is for my good to have my life follow his, never doubting the supreme importance of his plans—any more than he doubts now the supreme importance of having me to carry along with his other luggage. Really I quite adore Jim. Don't let anything in this letter seem to reflect on him. I shall be proudly dependent upon him. I shall rebel at times and he will call out the troops to save the union and my rebellion will be suppressed.

"One last word, dearest boy. Of course, you won't think that I was playing with you any more than you were playing with me. We are both born doubters who must touch wet paint and put fingers in the fire and investigate and explore and suffer and keep trying to find truth. We couldn't marry apart without first trying to find out whether we wanted to marry together, could we?

"And I refuse to suffer for my happiness, Rodney. I will not be sorry for those two days of rapture, though I have cried a good deal—but that is my way of being happy, you know. I wish, oh how I wish, that I could be with you often, but that cannot be. I think it will be better if a long time passes before we meet again. But we must meet again. This is not farewell.

"I hope—yes, I believe you will understand.

"Please remember what I told you. I meant it and I always shall."

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CHAPTER IX

Getting and Spending

IT is now over two years since Mary and I returned from our short honeymoon and established ourselves in that five-room section of a huge, ugly apartment building which we call home. As I look back upon our three weeks at White Springs it seems like the last chapter of the myth of youth. The unreal irresponsibility of the boy Rodney had its full flowering in those days of romance. I spent freely and luxuriously a considerable sum out of the balance of my savings which remained after paying for the furnishings of this "home." For the time I banished from my mind doubts of the past and worries of the future.

"We can't have but one honeymoon," said Mary and I. "We will not skimp its pleasure."

We rode and drove together in the mild sweet sunshine. We took long walks in moonlit trails that wound around the hillsides. We played at golf and danced and loitered along through Elysian days. At the end we started homeward with a certain dismayed feeling that we should have planned a longer stay in this isle of enchantment to which we would never be able to return. Yet this regret was soon

lost in anticipation of all the strange pleasures of making a new home and living a new life, which awaited us there, in the city of dirt and noise, but also of pleasant familiar ways and friendly faces.

Home-making did not prove exactly the easy entertainment that we had expected. There were differences of taste and judgment that seemed trifling at the outset but which grew in importance as they repeated themselves in discussion and planning. There were financial difficulties in the way of accomplishing a large number of our desires and we found the phrase "we'll have to do without that" so often in our life that the early sweet taste of sacrifice soured very soon to the bitter flavor of repression.

In Mary I discovered some baffling moods—illogical attitudes which lost the charm they wore in days of courtship and became curiously irritating. In me she found a stubbornness, which I deny all the more vehemently because I fear she is right. I am not going to set down a criticism of Mary because she has behaved splendidly in all the trouble that has come upon us. But this I will say. I must criticize her father and her mother for failing to give her any idea of the relationship between money and hours of work. Being a lawyer, every dollar I obtain comes from a certain amount of time spent in doing something. I cannot increase my income by digging more coal, or selling more soap, or by advertising bargains, or by absorbing competitors, or by any of the various means whereby Brown and Smith and

Jones may rise from poverty to affluence in ten years or less. The legal path to riches is a long, narrow way along the edge of the cliffs. Progress is usually slow; and those who try to go on a run are likely to fall exhausted, even if they avoid a fatal misstep, before they have advanced very far.

As I write these words I know that only a small number out of five thousand lawyers in this city are earning as much money as I am. For ordinary routine work it is impossible to charge at a rate which will produce even what I make above my office expenses. It requires specially good cases, in addition to the regular grind. But Smith and Brown and Jones, the wholesaler, the manufacturer and the jobber, whose sales may be expanded considerably according to their abilities and energies are making profits out of the labor of other men. Their annual income is not limited by their hours of work, but only by the ability with which they use their hours.

Mary cannot grasp this distinction between the money-making ability of the lawyer and of the business man. Eventually I may become one of the heads of a big law office and profit somewhat out of the work of subordinates. But to the end of my days my earnings out of the law will depend largely on the charges which I can make for my own time. Age and experience and prestige alone can materially increase my earning powers.

I try to explain this to Mary. She answers that Mr. Moulton, the lumber dealer, is reputed to have made two hundred thousand dollars in the last three

years! I stiffen my jaw and again point out that I am selling my time and not lumber. She remarks that Jethro Dean, who is a lawyer, is also a millionaire. I suggest that Dean is sixty-five years old, that he made most of his money in the Independent Steel Company and that he obtained a foothold in that company through his wife's inheritance of a block of stock from her father. Mary concludes the discussion by remarking plaintively that all our friends seem to be making more money than I am, yet "I certainly think you have more brains than most of them." In some way she suggests the idea that I am perversely squandering my talents. She indicates an opinion that an impractical idealism leads me to waste time amusing myself with social and civic problems whereby she is deprived of the luxuries provided for their wives by more practical husbands. At this stage I either become inexcusably profane or else take refuge in unmanly sulks.

Let me say in defense of Mary that she has been sorely tried for many months. Most unexpectedly our first few weeks of comparative comfort were changed into straining effort to carry an almost impossible burden. It is not surprising that Mary, who had prepared for economical luxury, as the wife of a prospering young lawyer, was resentful at the requirement of parsimonious living in a household where even payment of rent has been a matter of monthly anxiety.

The change in our fortunes came almost without warning—only a couple of months after the end of

the honeymoon. My father came down to the office rather late one morning. He stopped at my door for a moment and remarked that he was feeling a little queer, that he guessed he had eaten something that had disagreed with him. There was a look of worry in his eyes—something like the shadow of an approaching fear—as he passed on to his room. I leaned back in my chair shaken with a premonitory dread of trouble near at hand.

A few minutes later I heard him shouting some command to a hurrying stenographer, with accustomed vigor and impatience and, repressing my instinctive fears, I turned again to my work. It must have been an hour later when his secretary hurried into my room, her face pale and hands trembling.

"Something is wrong with your father," she stammered. "He can't talk. He looks very sick."

I ran into his office. He was leaning back in his chair inertly. He looked like a drunken man and apparently could not hold up his head. He tried to speak to me, but only unintelligible sounds came out of his loose lips. He raised his left arm and attempted to show me that his right arm hung helpless. I had never seen anyone in his condition, but the obvious thought exploded in my mind and left me momentarily dazed. It must be a stroke of paralysis.

"I'll call Dr. Nevinson," I said very loudly, feeling that I was speaking to a deaf person.

A flicker of relief—of hope—passed across his face.

An hour later he was lying in his bed at home and mother and I were listening to the doctor's verdict.

"He may recover from this stroke. It's impossible to tell, but it's somewhat likely. The future depends upon how far the blood clot in the brain dissolves. He may even recover the use of the arm and leg. But you may as well understand at once that this is the beginning of the end. His work is done. Careful treatment, easy living, absence of worry and strain—all these things may prolong his life—perhaps a year, two years, five years—no one can tell. But his working days are over. As soon as he is able to hear the news you must tell him, so that he will let you put his affairs in shape and not begin a new series of worries. He must leave everything to you, Rodney. Make that very clear to him and I will back you up. He must drop all his responsibilities and understand that he cannot expect to take them up again."

In a few days we told him. He received our message in silence with a strange look of mingled terror and relief. His terror harrowed me greatly because I knew his dread of death. Life on this earth was all that his philosophy accepted. He had neither fears of future pain nor hopes of happiness. As he saw it the door out of the warm, bright house of life opened upon a black void. One stepped out into nothingness—a horrible anticipation, because in his view apparently one stepped out alive, alert and strong into nothingness. His imagination had not pictured that gradual dissolution of his powerful bulk

of flesh and blood into a worn-out discomforting useless thing which the spirit would gladly and easily leave behind when the time came to float out through that door.

I could understand his terror, but the relief which I could see plainly mingled with it, puzzled me until I actually took over his affairs. Then I understood why he was so glad to lay his burden down. I could understand the comfort that would come to a man who could think: "I'll never have to worry about those things any more."

For a brainy, successful man he had managed to tangle up his personal affairs remarkably. The business of his clients was reasonably well ordered, and in shape to be taken up easily and carried forward. But his personal business records were unintelligible memoranda, incomplete correspondence, illegible little half-filled diaries and account books, check books balanced with his bank account by a system all his own, evidently devised for the purpose of concealing information. He had no clear record even of notes or bills outstanding. It was evident to me after a week's work that he must have carried on for some years an elaborate system of self-deception whereby he prevented himself from knowing his own financial condition, in order that he might draw successfully on his imagination in deceiving others, including his own family, as to his prosperity.

As a result, his family had not taken seriously occasional complaints of poverty in view of more frequent and vehement assertions of the successful

character of all his business operations. So great was his pride in being known as a successful man that he could not bear even to destroy the illusion in his own children but actually encouraged them to make daily additions to the back-breaking load he was carrying.

I could not believe that the situation was as desperate as my investigation disclosed. There must be some hidden resource on which he had counted to meet all his obligations—notes at the bank, overdue taxes, mortgage interest, bills and more bills to come. I had never known his income because we were not really partners. When I started to practice he had paid me a salary for a time. More recently—since my return from public office—we had shared fees in cases that he asked me to work on. But he did considerable work all alone, and was always quite secretive about it.

With much hesitation I presented my gloomy report to him—a statement of assets and liabilities. I read them aloud to him. Yes, the liabilities were all correct except—he owed this—and that. Altogether he added nearly a thousand dollars from memory of scattering accounts. Also he was a guarantor of some notes amounting to about eight thousand dollars, but he though Markelby who had made the notes would come into an inheritance within a year or so, and would pay them.

"Well, I'm glad the assets are all right," said I, trying to appear cheerful. "Have I missed anything?"

I was sure he would say, yes. He must have something concealed somewhere with which to pay this long list of debts.

"No," he answered, with a mild apologetic smile. "There is nothing more. But, Rodney, those railroad bonds—those aren't mine. Mrs. Gunderson put them up to secure a note, which I paid off at the bank last week, when I sold her old house. I placed them in my box for safe-keeping. She's in California, you know."

"Those aren't yours!" I exclaimed. "There isn't much left in the assets when you take those away."

"Pretty bad, isn't it!" he whispered, with a repetition of that wan smile.

"Well, I've some good news," I said hastily. "I had an offer yesterday to become general counsel of the Consolidated Motor Car Company—so don't let this bother you. Things are looking all right for me. Only I want to get your matters in good shape so I won't have to keep worrying you with questions."

It was not hard to speak cheerfully when I was with him. I saw him, who had always borne himself so reliantly, who had covered his distresses with such a show of confidence—I saw him now, stripped of all pretense, helpless, resigned. His pathetic mildness aroused an intense desire to accomplish some incredible coup whereby it might be possible to show him that after all he had done extraordinarily well and could lie down to sleep in deserved content.

In truth as I dug deeper into the records, the con-

viction came to me that he had done very well. Money-making is not the test of all ability or success. All his life he had fought to accomplish things which seemed to him worth achieving. He had given himself generously in unpaid service to the public. He had held a high office for years that carried with it no salary. He had given fifteen years to another public work, where even his expenses came out of his own pocket. He had not been willing to deny his family the comforts they craved, in order that he might fill these honorable positions. He had gone into debt, straining his credit to the utmost to give his children educational advantages—and now it was right that they should take up the burdens he had assumed for their benefit. It was the least that I could do now to lighten the load that rested on him as he lay helpless.

A few weeks later when I came into the house in the late afternoon for a little talk before going to my own home, my mother met me outside the door of his room.

"Dr. Nevinson is here," she said. "Father—has —gone to sleep. He looks so peaceful—so rested. I know I ought to be glad—for him."

. . . . .

This is the first time death has come so close to me. I have never been able to imagine what life would be without one of the two who have always been a part of my life. From earliest recollection

there have always been father and mother. Now there is only mother.

The face of death is not so unkind when it comes near. I see in it now, as in my father's face, the answer to the question that I feared had no answer —the fulfillment of a promise that I did not *know* had been made—and yet had always relied upon.

. . . . .

Many times I have wondered why so little is written down in books about the everyday struggle to get and the everyday necessity to spend. "Getting and spending we lay waste our powers." In this line of Wordsworth's there has seemed to me a text for a great story of life. Yet most writers, even the sternest realists, pass lightly over the detail of how a man plans and drudges and acquires and how the bills accumulate while creditors and dependents insistently press their demands, until the weary worker wonders how a world full of overdriven men and women is not more insane even than it appears in our moments of exceptional sanity.

But when I sit down to write of my recent months I find there is little to tell that is worth the telling. Like others who, I have felt, neglected their opportunity to write a great story of ordinary living, I shall merely sketch an outline of my days.

Somehow or other I have managed to keep the ship afloat. For a time I was quite desperate. Especially I remember the day when Mr. Belknap came to see me about the possibility of getting aid from

the law in his fight with his big competitor which has been officially declared not to be a wicked "trust." This was shortly after my father's death, when I was trying to keep myself from seeking any aid from my father-in-law—yet feeling that I could not let my pride hold me back much longer.

The revelation of Mr. Belknap's business situation disposed of any thought of aid from that source. He was moderately wealthy, but every dollar he could raise was being used in the life or death struggle either to remain in business as an independent manufacturer, or else to force his great and ruthless competitor to buy him out at a fair price. In the course of this business battle there was considerable work for a lawyer, so that I did earn some good fees. Eventually a deal was made whereby my father-in-law was saved from financial ruin. But with his health undermined he has been forced to retire from active business upon an income which is not really sufficient for his needs.

It has happened therefore that in my two years of effort to take care of two families, I have had to carry the load practically alone. One or two friends have aided me temporarily in difficult places and I have had some good luck in making and collecting a few exceptional fees just in time to prevent the ruin of such credit as I command. On the whole I have been able to keep going by plodding, persistent work day in, day out, supplemented by extra hours in the evening at my office or at home. I have cleaned up every old case in the office, working desperately to

finish as much business as quickly as possible, so as to get in every fee which would satisfy the obligations that somehow must be met. Besides taking care of mother and father and Mary and myself, there was a year, while George, my younger brother, was finishing his college course, in which the family burden was heavier than now.

Edna, my sister, who had spent several years preparing for a musical career, gave up her studies with considerable alacrity and announced her intention of helping to nurse father. The exact amount of aid which she has given to my overworked mother is hardly worth estimation. I can, however, certify to the fact that she has provided me with a peculiarly distressing problem. To a young lawyer seeking to support a bed-ridden father, a mother, a wife, a brother finishing college and himself, the additional expense of an able-bodied young woman of cultivated tastes, has seemed quite large and somewhat unjustifiable.

Musically Edna has no talent above the level of comic opera. To advise her to get a job as a chorus girl would have indicated a callous unbrotherly attitude toward her probable future. With her luxurious desires and somewhat reckless spirit her failure in self-support would have been practically assured, unless she should have achieved a certain apparent success that would have been equally distressing. I could not suggest any other employment with any hope of satisfactory results.

"My private opinion," confessed my mother, "is

that Edna will probably marry Mr. Guernsey, that young stockbroker, you know, who paid her so much attention last winter. She didn't encourage him then very much, because she was fascinated with that crazy Hammersmith man who was always at least half drunk."

"Yes, I remember," I answered. "She was going to reform him. She said he had such a brilliant mind, and he thought she was so original. They were a good mutual admiration society. Neither of them has any common sense. Thank heaven, he has gone to California. Is this Guernsey person any better?"

"Oh, he's really a very nice young man—a little superficial, but he's young."

"I wouldn't expect Edna to attract any two-ton intellect," I suggested grumpily. "Of course, I can't play the matchmaking game. I'll leave that to you, mummie. I don't want to send sister out to stalk a husband. Furthermore, it's hard for a brother to see why anyone should want to marry his sister. But although she doesn't seem to me very well fitted to be a wife, I guess she's better equipped to be a wife than anything else. The chances are also that she'll capture some man who isn't trained to be a husband; so it won't be an unfair bargain. They'll both be stung. I suppose the best thing I can do for her is to supply her with clothes and carfare and let her go out on the trail."

"I don't blame you for feeling disappointed in Edna," said mother, with a gentle smile, "but re-

member she is young. She will settle down. I only hope she meets the right man."

"If she does she'll be the wrong girl," was my moody response.

So Edna played at being the daughter of ease while I counted the outgoing dollars and tried not to feel mercenarily hopeful whenever mother reported a new "heart interest." A few months ago, just as the Guernsey attentions were wearing a cheerfully serious aspect, that "Wild Bill" Hammersmith returned to Chicago. He hadn't taken a drink in three weeks, he averred, and he felt sure that if Edna would marry him and go back with him to California, where he had an interest in a prune business, or something of the sort, he would settle down to a virtuous and prosperous existence.

I was skeptical about this sudden reform but Edna had no doubt of her great and saving influence; and mother's reforming instincts rallied to her daughter's support. They married. Edna is living in California. "Wild Bill" is sober intermittently and contributes at intervals to her support. At other times she calls on me and I send half what she asks for and postpone the payment of some of my less stale bills. I must admit she is costing a little less married and away than when single and at home. So I suppose I should feel a limited gratitude to Hammersmith.

George is through college and already earning a part of what he spends. He "borrows" the balance from me—and I enjoy a faint hope that some day

these loans may be repaid, in a time of special need. I have cast a good deal of bread on the waters in recent months. I am afraid most of it will be pretty soggy from long immersion before the day of its prophesied return.

As I sit writing to-day, looking back over a wretched two years, uncertain of the future and yet somehow confident that, with so many apparently impossible tasks accomplished, the comparatively ordinary difficulties that are before me can be overcome, my thought lingers on a black night many months ago. Everything had gone wrong that day. I had lost an important case. A client owing a large bill had written that he would try to pay half of it the next month. I had a note due the following day at the bank. I had added up nearly a thousand dollars of pressing bills that must be paid immediately. The mortgage interest on mother's vacant and unsalable house was three days overdue. I had come home with frayed nerves and a discouraged spirit. Mary was sick and harassed with household troubles. We had quarreled quite bitterly. She had gone to bed. I sat alone and tried to find some reason for wanting to remain alive. Somehow I could not even take a morbid pleasure in the thought of suicide.

If I were dead what would happen to mother and Mary and Edna—and George? Well, brother and sister could or should take care of themselves. Perhaps Mr. Belknap could do something for Mary. But that was my job. I had no business handing her back to him. He was broken in health and over-

burdened. Then there was mother. There was no one to take care of her. It would mean for her a miserable ending to a pretty hard life. No, I could not even contemplate the cowardly relief of ending my own life. I had to go through.

But, I thought, there must be some purpose in this dreadful mess of work and pain and worry. The purpose of my life cannot be merely to keep a few other lives out of the worst of wretchedness. There must be some individual purpose. I began to think of old speculations and discussions of God the Builder. What was being built with me—or in me? What would be built out of my humiliations, my shame, out of the collapse of my worldly pretenses of position and ability—if to-morrow I defaulted payments, was sued, became notoriously insolvent, had to give up my offices, accept some minor position and then struggle along for months or years trying just to provide meager food and clothing and shelter for those who had relied on me—who had been proud of me—once?

Why must I go through this torture?

Then all at once it came to me that my torture was self-torture. In plain fact, no matter what happened, probably I could provide a minimum of comfort for those dependent on me, and for myself. We would not suffer physically, unless further misfortune assailed us. My anticipated pain would be mental suffering. But suppose that I held my head erect and said to myself, and that through my eyes I said to all the world: I didn't weaken; I didn't give

up; I did the best I could; I did all that I could; I'm sorry I failed but I'm not ashamed.

Suddenly my tired, snarled brain became clear and refreshed. I had discovered a truth—old as creation, yet new to me,—new to anyone who has only read it, but who has never known it, never understood its meaning in himself. I had realized that no one except me could touch my soul. No one could impress a single phase of good or evil upon that soul of mine, but me. When men sneered at me it would not hurt unless I carried the sneer on into my soul—and sneered at myself.

I thought of how men reverenced that imperturbable soul untouched by the revilings and scorn of the rabble,—that soul behind the lips that said: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." And then I understood how any man who held his soul within himself could march ahead to carry out the purpose of his being—wounded, scarred, disfigured—perhaps—but never beaten. I realized that it is only when a man throws down the protection of his own will and yields his soul into the hands of others,—that he can suffer the agony of real defeat.

I remembered that I had read a poem long before which had expressed that idea, although I had not really understood it at that time. I hunted it up and read it over and over again until I felt the words had been engraved so deeply in my mind that I would never lose the thought. I can quote it now from memory:

SALVATION

Let me but hold my soul—
Though stripped of pride and naked in its shame,
Blotted my name upon the scroll
Of passing honor and what men call fame.

Let me but hold my soul—
Still warm within the scarred and withered flesh
And no cracked evening bell shall toll
For me the end—when I set forth afresh.

Let me but hold my soul—
And I shall find in every lie its truth,
In broken things the secret whole,
In gray and haggard age, oncoming youth.

Let me but hold my soul—
Though naught of faith and hope and love be true—
Steadfast, let me but hold my soul!
Beyond the last, lost cause I shall win through!

I have repeated those lines to myself in many distressing situations during the last year. They may not be good poetry but they have been good medicine for me. They carried me through my darkest hour. They have given me a new sort of courage—a certain impenetrable pride in my own being and its purpose that I hope may stay with me to the end.

CHAPTER X

Opportunities

THREE years have passed since I have written down anything about myself. I have fought my way up out of the chasm of debt into a comparatively secure place. It begins to look as though I might make something worth while out of my life, something sufficiently notable to give my story some day an interest to someone besides myself. With this hopeful thought I take up my writing again.

Just about the time I was emerging from insolvency two temptations came to me. I resisted the worthier and yielded to the less worthy—yet strange to say it seems that I did right. Surely the issues of right and wrong are difficult to determine.

My first temptation came in an offer to join a group of congenial enthusiasts who were about to launch a new magazine. They had secured a substantial money backing and their program for *The Liberal* appealed greatly to me. The editorial position offered carried a fair salary for the support of one family. I could write as I believed, travel, investigate interesting questions, feel that I was a useful force in shaping public opinion. I could have

a good time and do something which seemed worth doing.

What I could do was amply satisfying. It was what I could not do that stopped me. I could not provide those whom my income supported with the amount of comfort which they felt to be necessary. Family expenses must be cut in half. I must shut my ears to the demands of all except my wife and my mother. I must give up the struggle to save some of mother's debt-burdened property; cease straining to fulfill old obligations of my father. In short I must start life afresh—and primarily for myself. I was convinced that this was my right. Here was a chance to throw aside the drudging legal work I detested and take up the joyous labor of self-expression.

Someone once wrote, "the curse of the world is joyless labor." I think it was Elbert Hubbard. It is a profound truth. My opportunity had come to escape from this curse. Yet somehow I could not open the prison door. To free myself I must imprison those whose freedom depended on my slavery. Desire whispered to me that I might make a great success and do more for those dependent on me by following my inclinations. But worldly wisdom refuted the sophistry of desire. I knew that I could make more money by continuing to practice law.

My final decision was not heroic. Perhaps it was dictated by cowardice. Perhaps I feared the hazard of a change. I know that the motives in every hard decision are manifold. The eulogist may select the

higher reason; the detractor may point out the lower; the candid biographer should list them all. In my case I did not boldly renounce or accept. I procrastinated and while I wavered the opportunity faded until I summoned up the courage to turn my back on it and say to myself: It is gone. A little later when I glanced around for one last look I found that in truth it was gone.

The second temptation followed swiftly and I yielded to it the more readily because I felt I had just sacrificed my heart's desire and thus had purified motives that might otherwise have seemed questionable. For several days the newspapers had been discussing an impending conflict between the government and railroads. Preparations were under way for a joint demand by the transcontinental roads for increased freight rates in the middle west. Powerful shipping interests had brought pressure on several state governments to organize an opposition. After an imposing inter-state conference it had been determined that a committee of lawyers should be formed to represent the principal states concerned, in the forthcoming hearings before the Interstate Commerce Commission in Washington. It was generally assumed that political influence rather than legal ability would determine the choice of the lawyer who would represent Illinois and earn the large fees and obtain the wide advertising attaching to the job.

It had occurred to me that possibly I might maneuver for employment as an assistant counsel in

this matter. Jack Emmet was very influential with the governor and the "Big Boy" had been particularly friendly to me ever since my father's death. They had had a respectful liking for each other, despite many noisy disagreements. In days long past when father was a major political power and the "Big Boy" was fighting his way up from the toughest ward in the city, father had done him several small but valuable services. Part of the "Big Boy's" creed was that every favor carried with it an obligation of repayment. During father's brief illness, he had insisted on visiting him and had been his only visitor from outside the family group.

Father always took an exorbitant pride in any accomplishment of mine. I suspect his over-warm praise of my efforts touched the sentimental side of the "Big Boy," whose own chief pride lay in his college-educated son. At any rate he was unduly cordial to me thereafter and seemed really desirous of giving me a boost whenever there was an easy opportunity.

Such was the situation one hot July day when Pillar Grayson came into my office. Grayson is a character worthy of description for his own sake, aside from the large influence he has exercised on my life. His father, a Methodist minister, had named him Pillar, in the hope, I believe, that he would be a stalwart support of the House of the Lord—in which hope he must have been sorely disappointed. Pillar's chief assets in life have been a rugged physique, an imaginative mind, perpetual good humor

and a genius for making friends. In college he was a great athlete and a leader in all forms of student life. He jogged through law school and jollied his way into a semi-political law business, out of which he might have become wealthy except for his incorrigible generosity. He divided his large fees freely with associates who contributed in small measure to the results accomplished through his ingenuity and popularity.

As he sprawled in a chair on the client side of my flat-top desk, I marveled again at his persistent youthfulness. He must be a little over fifty. His dark hair is very gray, but luxuriant. His smooth-shaven face has the pink of a boy of twenty. His gray eyes sparkle and his laugh rings out, as he illuminates what might be a dull business talk with his radiant humor. No wonder men like to work with him. It is a pleasure to have him around. He has thrown off his coat and he slaps his billowing shirt front.

"Getting fat," he chuckles. "Haven't played but three games of golf this year. But in August,—oh boy, how I am going to punish that evasive little pill!"

"What do you go around in?" I inquire.

"In a pair of knickerbockers that my wife bought me," he parries. "She thinks I have such handsome legs. I'm not telling my scores yet. I'll come in and brag to you at the end of August. What do you know about the Mid-West rate case? I hear you are going to be Special Counsel for Illinois."

"Your hearing is better than mine. I haven't heard such a thing even whispered."

"Well I'm shouting it now. It's my job, really, but I'm going to give it to you."

Thereupon my entertaining visitor proceeded to unfold a political plot and to present me with my second temptation—the one I did not resist.

It seemed that Grayson had arranged the political cards so that he would be named Special Counsel in the rate case. He had been a railroad attorney a decade before, but had differed so bitterly with the attitude of his employers toward the public that he had been forced to resign. Since then he had been representing shippers' organizations and had fought their battles against the railroads with much success. Naturally, when the railroad politicians had received advance information of Grayson's plan, they had pulled every wire to keep him out of this case. They had finally obtained assurances from the Governor that their most feared antagonist would not be chosen to represent Illinois.

"But I intend to be there just the same," said he, banging his fist down on my desk, "and that's why I've come to you. That appointment is going to be decided by the Governor, Jack Emmet and "Cash" Pulsifer. You know Pulsifer? No? Well, he won't count much anyhow. The Governor is really for me but he's committed against me. I've suggested that he might choose you and, if Emmet approves of you, he'll do it. Then he wouldn't be very

much shocked if you should choose me as your associate counsel."

Grayson winked elaborately as he thus exposed his plan to beat the railroad lobby.

"I don't know whether Emmet would go that far for me," I suggested. "He has offered several times to help me in any way that he could, but this is going a long way. It's a pretty big job to present to a political nonentity like me."

"Emmet will be all right if you ask him," declared Grayson with his customary positiveness. Pillar was a perpetual optimist. He always assumed the best and his very confidence bred confidence in those he sought to convince.

"Here's the game," he continued. "The Middle West Shippers' Association wants me in this case. They're a strong crowd, but I told them how the roads had blocked me. Emmet wants to please them. Now you see Emmet and tell him that the shippers will be satisfied if you are chosen. Meanwhile, I'll see them and fix things so that they'll tell Emmet you are the man they want. Don't mention my name to Emmet. Just tell him that the shippers want you. It's a cinch, Rodney. We can put it over before the railroad crowd knows what's happening. But we must work fast. Emmet is going down to Springfield to meet the Governor and Pulsifer tomorrow night. Is it a go?"

"Then if I get the job, I appoint you as associate counsel—is that the play?"

"That's the idea—provided, of course, you think I'm competent," he added with a grin.

"Oh, you're the best man in the state for this work," I answered. "That doesn't bother me. But I do hate to go to Emmet. He doesn't do favors for nothing. There will be an implied obligation for me to do something for him in return—even if he doesn't demand some express promise from me."

"Cross that bridge when you get to it," he suggested. "This is too good a chance for both of us to worry about what Emmet may expect. Don't forget: he won't do it for you. He'll be working for his friends, the shippers. Let him look to them for return favors."

After much talk and after stifling many misgivings I agreed to go to see Emmet. To those unacquainted with the mysterious atmosphere of practical politics it may seem strange that I hesitated. But politics is a peculiar business involving many unspoken promises and unwritten obligations. When you ask a politician for help you may not agree, or even discuss, how you will pay for the favor, but he expects payment of equal value to be made sometime. The man who accepts aid and then refuses to "come across" when he is called upon is soon classed with the card player who does not pay his debts. Men who know him will not play with him.

If Jack Emmet obtained this appointment for me he would feel that he should be allowed to exercise some control over my conduct of the work. For my

part I should not acknowledge any right in him to interfere with any action which I felt necessary to protect my client, the public. Perhaps he would never ask me to do anything that I would feel to be improper. But I was fearful. Knowing how far apart our ethical standards were, and considering the many ways in which he might think he could profit by controlling one of the attorneys in this important case, I could see many chances for violent disagreement with the "Big Boy" if I obtained this job through his favor.

The "pure young man" of my college days would have resisted Grayson's temptation. But the man of more than ten years later, plodding along an uphill road pulling the load of two families, did not feel that he could afford the mental luxuries of earlier days. I was forced to estimate my own value less as a man, in order that it might be greater as a draught horse. My final judgment was not cynical but it had a bitter flavor.

"It appears to me," I explained, "that I am to persuade Jack Emmet that it is to his advantage to give me a good job; and then having obtained the job, I must see to it that Emmet obtains no advantage. Sounds like a confidence game, doesn't it?"

"Not at all," roared Grayson. "The day you put over a confidence game on the 'Big Boy' you can hang your hat in the Hall of Fame. I tell you he won't lift a finger for you. He'll only do this for the shippers. He'll have no right to claim that he did a thing for your sake."

"I'm going to make sure of that, anyhow," I answered. "Pillar, I think you are a very tempting devil and I'm going to say: 'Get thee behind me Satan; you push and I'll pull; and if we win, associate counsel shall be your name!' When shall I go to see Emmet?"

"Not before to-morrow," he said jumping up and seizing his hat. "I'll see my shippers this afternoon. Bye! Bye!"

My little strategy to test the extent of the "Big Boy's" affection for me was quite successful. I met him at the club after lunch and drew him away to a quiet corner.

"Is there any chance that I might be considered as attorney for the state in that Mid-West rate case?" I inquired bluntly. "I have some friends who would back me for the position if it were worth while to ask them. You know I've a big burden to carry since my father's death and I'd appreciate any encouragement you could give me."

"My boy," he said very solemnly, "I'd do anything in the world I could for you—for your own sake as well as for your father's." He actually simulated sufficient emotion to bring a faint mist over his wise little eyes. "But you see the Governor has his mind already made up on this matter. He hasn't told me yet whom he is going to choose but, confidentially, I can tell you that I know it is a certain man that the Shippers' Association has suggested. You see the Governor wants to stand well with the shippers. I wish I could help you. There's no one

I'd sooner see have the job. But I know I couldn't do it. The Governor wouldn't listen to me."

"Well now that's very important news to me," I answered, trying to appear quite naïve and feeling very foolish, "because I just heard to-day that some of the big men in the Shippers' Association are for me. If I could get them to speak to the Governor, don't you think that would help?"

The "Big Boy" looked out of the window for a very long minute. His eyes were almost shut. He had the appearance of a man thinking rapidly and a trifle afraid that his thoughts might become visible. Then he spoke very slowly.

"If you have some friends among the shippers it is barely possible that something might be done, although you have come to me pretty late. You had better let me find out if this man I mentioned has all the shippers back of him. If they are not too deeply committed I might do something. You know I'd be glad to help you if I could."

He turned abruptly and started across the room.

"There is a man I want to see," he tossed back over his shoulder. "I'll telephone you later in the afternoon if I have any news."

An hour afterward he called me on the 'phone.

"Drop over and see me about four-thirty"; his voice was very friendly.

Pillar Grayson is a smooth worker. Jack Emmet claims full credit for my appointment as Special Counsel. But I do not feel that my obligation to him is oppressively heavy.

CHAPTER XI

Family Secrets

MY intimate friends have been puzzled to understand why the honor and profit of representing the state in the now famous Mid-West rate case came into my unworthy hands. They have been still more puzzled to understand why, as the sensational hearings in Washington progressed, the young and comparatively unknown Rodney Merrill took such a prominent part in the proceedings. Being unable to justify this as the result of any exceptional legal ability they have finally arrived at the conclusion that I had a desire for the spotlight not shared by other more eminent attorneys engaged in the same case and that I have exceptional capacity for self-advertising.

The true explanation for the surprising publicity which my work received was much simpler than this. I found myself associated with a group of older lawyers, none of whom had given any special study to the questions presented and all of whom were much more concerned with other business than with this one case. On the other hand I had given several years' special study to the problems involved in this hearing and, seeing the great opportunity which the

situation offered me, I sacrificed all other work to the one purpose of making this fight successful. Furthermore, Grayson, although occupied with many other matters, gave invaluable advice and immediate aid at every critical time. With his customary generosity he was always willing that the major credit for our joint operations should be given to me.

It would be tiresome to recount the detail of this long-drawn out controversy. To me it is a romance; but if I tried to translate the technique of a lawsuit into a story that would interest laymen I am sure I should be less interesting than my medical friends who endeavor, with such wasted enthusiasm, to excite me with tales of the wars of the wicked streptococci and the noble anti-toxins.

There were, however, scattered dramatic events that might serve to give some indication of the character of the fighting waged by my opponents. One of these seems worth relating, not merely for its own sake, but also because it involves the intimate beginning of my acquaintance with a woman who may affect profoundly my future. In order to represent fairly my attitude toward Irma Conway and to give an understanding of the place she has come to fill in my life I must write quite frankly regarding Mary and me as a married couple. Certainly I do not expect anything that I write down to be published—if at all—while either for us is living, so why should I not be honest with anyone who may take an interest in my story?

Perhaps I should explain that I have no sympathy

with the sentimentality that would draw a veil of secrecy, or a tissue of pretty lies, over the lives of the dead. Men and women learn from experience and from knowledge of the lives of other men and women. To tell only half the story of a life is to lie about it and to sin most grievously against one's fellows. The writing of veneered and varnished lives of the great is part and parcel of that false education whereby children are told that storks bring babies, youths are told that passion is indecent, and finally adults are told that an error in selecting a mate is irremediable and any effort to repair the error is the commission of an unpardonable sin.

The only value in my story of an ordinary man, who has enough intelligence to know that he is not a great man, must be found in the educational value to others of a true story. Truth must be "the whole truth." I shall endeavor not to offend against intelligent good taste, but I shall not cover up important facts merely to avoid the criticism of prudes and prigs.

Mary and I have done far better in the difficult relationship of marriage than most of our friends. We get more comfort and pleasure out of it than discomfort and pain. That's doing pretty well. Some of our friends say that we are the only happy married couple they know. This indicates a prevailing low standard of happiness, because I should describe our state more accurately by saying that we are not unhappy. I bore Mary somewhat with business detail and she bores me somewhat with

household trivialities. We dance together well, but without enthusiasm. We dine at home without argumentative or exhilarating conversation, quietly grateful for the social custom that separates husband and wife when they dine out.

Mary has catalogued my mentality and I have labeled hers. To her I am a theorist whose conversation is fairly interesting except upon subjects in which she has a personal interest. Then I am irritating. To me her ideas are safe, sane and banal. I know her opinions in advance on almost all questions and she discounts mine before they are expressed. Thus we do not stimulate each other mentally.

In the matter of physical attraction we have passed through the period of romance and illusion and have only the normal interest of a healthy male and female for each other. This is a somewhat comfortable condition from my point of view—or I should say that it was, until I met Irma. It is unsatisfactory to Mary. She tells me that a woman's nature craves a lover and that a devoted husband should remain a lover. I respond, as is true, that I love her dearly, but that without attempting the impossibility of continually acting a part I cannot maintain the fervid devotion of courtship. She admits that I am fond of her but insists that I do not love her. I find it impossible to corner her with an admission that she is no more than just fond of me. She always qualifies her statement with the thought that the subsidence of my love fever is re-

sponsible for the negative character of her feeling toward me.

The fact is that Mary and I have "settled down" and we are both young enough to resent this placidity. I suppose that if we had children we would accept the congealment of our youth more gracefully. We would feel a joint responsibility toward something outside ourselves. Yet our married friends with children do not escape discontent. The most recent divorce in our acquaintance concerns a woman of twenty-nine who has three charming children. She wanted them and she loves them. But she has been heard to remark that rather than bear a child every two years for twenty years she would desert the best man on earth. A sweet old grand-aunt informs me that this attitude is one of the sad results of the modern over-education of women. To her faded vision the desire of this young woman to cultivate and expand and exploit her own personality, and her resentment at the continual necessity of neglecting her own growth to nourish her young—appears all wrong. My aunt says she should grow in her children. Our friend answers that she is not growing; that she is going to seed before she has attained her growth.

I have been rambling around this question because I want to explain my conviction that the whole trouble with Mary and me does not arise from the lack of children. In truth even one child would add so to my staggering load that, while we have hoped for one, I, particularly, have mingled dread

with my hope. My responsibilities to adults are wearing enough. An obligation to a helpless child would add much to my cares.

Mary and I had a typical argument, which I well remember one Sunday afternoon. We had attended church that morning. Mary likes to go to church, irregularly. She says it makes her feel surer mentally. I usually object to going to church, partially because it damages my religious illusions. The teachings of Christ have given me the only philosophy of life in which I can hold faith. His Word comes to me as the brightest light from outside my own confusing experience of life. But the words of most of the ordained preachers of official truth disturb and irritate me with triviality of reasoning, with ignorance or ignoring of scientific fact, and with dogmatic assumption of wisdom which most obviously is lacking. They "darken knowledge."

In the sermon of this particular Sunday morning a very earnest and eloquent clergyman had discoursed upon the frivolous waste of life in pursuit of pleasure. Pulpit attacks on the leisure class are safe and popular. The financial support of the churches comes, not from idlers of inherited wealth, but from active masters of industry, whose wealth depends on the general acceptance of a philosophy that those who live dumbly and are belabored are the salt of the earth, who will receive their reward hereafter. Of course the lowly must be encouraged to wait for the profit from their labors until after death in order that their masters may use this profit

for their own benefit in this life. It is the problem of a minister of the gospel to reconcile this working philosophy with the doctrine of the Son of Man who said: "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

The reverend Mr. Falsinger developed eloquently the contrast between the childless couple spending their evenings in bridge or at the theater, or in the various intoxications of wine, women and song; and on the other hand the family circle where father and mother and "Sissy" and "Junior" and "Toots" sit around the lamp light. The contrast grew worse as the years rolled by. Eventually a hardened old sport sat in his lonely club room while a thousand miles away a querulous, wrinkled, painted woman, who was once his wife, quarreled with her third husband over whether to go to Florida or California for another boresome winter.

In contrast to this picture was the happy fireside of the thrifty, child-producing couple, with the oldest boy home from college and the oldest girl just returned from her honeymoon with a noble son-in-law. There was a sketch of younger children in the background, and grandchildren anticipated, a thought suggested as delicately indelicate and yet felt to be quite proper.

Of course, there are large, useful, happy families and there are small, useless, unhappy families. The natural and most surely satisfying family includes children. The ideal condition is obvious. But it happens that of the two families of my most intimate

acquaintance, the childless household of Mary and me is a far more sunny, cheerful place than the child-crowded household in which I was reared. Honest and interesting discussion of life should include something beyond the normal or most desirable. Also I insist that bridge-whist is a keener, better brain developing exercise than charades. However, my complaint against the sermon lay in the unfair standard for judging life by externals which it inculcated. The Great Teacher demanded consideration also of the inside of the cup. Mary, being impressionable by such external standards, found in this sermon a complete explanation of our underlying discontent.

"I don't suppose we can expect to be really happy —we haven't a right to be—until we have children. So many people have them who don't want them. It seems so unjust that we can't have them."

"According to that doctrine," I retorted, "no one can be happy unless married, because I suppose the reverend Mr. Falsinger wouldn't approve of children without marriage."

"Of course not," said the literal Mary.

"Also," I continued, "he doesn't believe in divorce; so there must be one woman for every man. But, since there are a few million more men than women in this country, are all those extra men condemned to unfulfilled lives?"

"That isn't fair argument," she replied. "If people marry they marry to produce children. If they have no children they fail."

"I grant you they fail in that very important matter; but must their lives be failures? I'll tell you what I object to in that sermon. It assumes that life is a simple matter of maturing physically and then sacrificing everything else to bringing a new set of human beings to maturity who will then continue that endless purposeless chain. My idea is that human life is development—not merely reproduction —that each human being has the job of improving somewhat on the personality with which he starts. If he does this, then the next generation ought to start with a little better inheritance than his. Of course this means that each of us must do his best to reproduce. But it also means that reproduction isn't the whole purpose. Development is vitally important to successful living. If you and I can't have children, at least we can develop ourselves in such a way as to add our infinitely small trifle to the improvement of mankind. Maybe this will work itself out in someone else; maybe we may carry on an improved spirit, or soul, or something immortal into a future phase of existence."

"But Mr. Falsinger didn't deny the value of self-development. He criticised the waste of hours in cards and dancing and other kinds of pleasure seeking."

"Why did he call it waste, Mary? He assumed it was waste; but he didn't explain what made the difference between waste and useful living. He irritated me because he talked about the obvious. Of course a happy family is better than an unhappy one.

But I believe the problem of life is to find and to achieve its purpose. Religion must be the guide to the purpose. When I go to church and my official guide ignores all my questions as to where and why I am going, and devotes himself to telling me how to go, I feel that I am cheated. Frankly, I think I know more about how to live than he does. But if he has studied the matter exhaustively I should like to have him give me his ideas of the purpose and aim of all this living."

"Perhaps if we had children we wouldn't have so much time to speculate about why we are living," suggested Mary.

"That's the work drug that is so well advertised as the panacea for all mental ills. Work and play are good medicine in reasonable doses. Too much of either is a poison. But here is a question, Mary. Ask Mr. Falsinger: 'If we can't have children, ought we to be divorced and to try other mates?' "

This speculation went too far. Mary took me too seriously. The conversation became more personal, then embittered. It ended in tears, hastily dried up when some friends called on us to join them for a walk through the park. Once more I resolved that I would not go to church again. The whole disturbance was the fault of Mr. Falsinger!

For a time Mary and I had many talks of this character. We tried to explore beyond the horizons of everyday ideas. We not only lost our way but we lost each other early in every exploration and it took much patient searching to get us together again.

BOOK III

WOMAN

CHAPTER XII

Enter Irma

THE romantic beginning of my acquaintance with Irma Conway resulted from Halliwell's fantastic scheme. It is a queer story that I find it hard to tell candidly without making myself out to be either a hero or a fool. But first I must explain how Halliwell reasserted his intoxicating influence of college days in my later and more sober years.

I had been working for some weeks in Washington on the Mid-West case. My life was quite unexciting. There were, intermittently, long dull hearings before the Interstate Commerce Commission and in the days between I struggled through bales of statistics and read and reread and analyzed and classified innumerable confused and confusing opinions of courts, and prepared elaborate arguments to add to the general confusion of legal thought. I did not know many people in Washington and soon came to remember the faces of a few who persistently passed before my eyes. Particularly I came to recognize a sallow, thin-faced, snub-nosed young fellow whom I often saw lounging in front of the offices of the Commission when I emerged at the end of the day's hearing.

One evening I took a cousin of Mary's to the theater. She was in Washington for only two days and Mary had written asking me to look her up. I walked back to my hotel after leaving her at the house of the friend with whom she was stopping. In a moment of absent-mindedness I turned into the wrong street at Dupont Circle and after walking half a block suddenly turned back. Before I reached the Circle I passed and recognized in the light of a nearby street lamp that snub-nosed young man with the thin sallow face. The idea popped into my head that he might be following me. To test the notion, after walking a few blocks I turned a corner and stepped quickly into the door of an apartment building. Within a few seconds this same young man came around the corner and paused uncertainly, obviously speculating as to where I had gone. Then he walked briskly ahead and I emerged from concealment, retraced my steps for a block, and returned to my hotel by a roundabout route.

Until long after midnight, I sat up puzzling over this new phase of my Washington experiences. Clearly I was being shadowed. For whom? During a few angry minutes I wondered if Mary were doing this. Then I realized that that suspicion was unwarranted. Mary wouldn't do it. Mary couldn't. This man had been trailing me for many days. Evidently he was not alone. There must be two or three employed to keep track of a man night and day. The expense alone was so large as to eliminate all suspicion of Mary, though in truth she had never

shown or had any cause for a jealousy likely to result in such an action. The obvious answer was that the railroads I was fighting had employed detectives. For what purpose? Well, probably to know what I was doing; possibly to see if I could be caught in some discreditable episode. However, they had exposed themselves to a counter-move. Suppose I trapped their spies? An exposure of such practice at some dramatic moment might be an effective move in this game.

The next morning at breakfast I noticed a lean, bearded man at the table just beyond mine. He sat half-facing me and between his nervous sips of coffee and incessant inhalations of cigarette smoke it seemed that he was watching me closely. Just as I was reproving myself for getting into an excitable frame of mind where every glance would disturb me, the man arose and walked over to my table.

"Of course you wouldn't recognize me," he said, dropping into a chair without waiting for an invitation. "You think you know every flicker of the eyelash of an old friend and then he grows a tender little beard and you won't even respond to a hint."

"I know your voice just the same, you old fraud, Gene Halliwell," I answered, "but when you wrote me long ago that you had grown a beard I thought you meant a nice civilized little trimming—not a great hedge like that. Besides I'm being followed by detectives and you look just like a stage villain, so I never suspected that I knew you."

"Are you being followed too?" he queried. "Isn't

that grand! I have two on my trail. They're parked out in the lobby now. If we take a walk together it will look like a procession. What high crime have you committed?"

"None as yet. I think some of my friends are hoping to catch me in an indiscretion. What is your affair about?"

"It's an affair of state," he chuckled. "I'm just back from South America to make some confidential reports to the State Department. Ever since I took the Panama Canal our South American brethren view my appearances in Washington with deep suspicion."

"Did you take the Panama Canal?" I asked skeptically. "I always thought that was Roosevelt's responsibility."

"Oh, he got the credit and he's welcome to it. But little Gene did the wicked work. Didn't you know I was stationed at Bogota at that time?"

"You wrote me two postcards and one letter, if I remember correctly, but they were mostly about the poor quality of wine and women in that remote capital."

"My private mail was always public property in that charming country," he remarked. "I couldn't tell of the idealistic villainy I was performing, but I thought you might have guessed, when all the row broke out, that I was in the thick of the trouble. Those were wild times. But T. R. was absolutely right. I knew that gentlemanly brigand Mr. Maroquin would double-cross us. You ought to have seen

the noble senate of the United States of Colombia in session debating the treaty with the United States of America. Every man made a speech on both sides of the question so that when orders came from the Dictator, the honorable Vice-President Maroquin, he could vote whichever way the Dictator told him. It was an unholy farce. The only trouble with Roosevelt was that he was too gentlemanly with the robbers. If he had been willing to say the word Panama would have had a perfect South American revolution—lots of noise and nobody hurt. As it was, not being quite sure how the United States was going to act, the revolution was somewhat of a mess. One Chinaman and a rather nice dog were killed."

"What are you doing now?" I interrupted, "and how long are you going to be here?"

"Can't answer either question. I don't know what I'm doing. The State Department said to come home and here I am. I thought it was about my fuss with the Steel Corporation, but in a dozen confabs with the chief that business hasn't been even mentioned. So I guess that's what I'm here for. It's a pretty story. I'll tell you all about it some day. Main point is that our patriotic captains of industry were engineering a nasty business between Chili and Argentina out of which they expected to land a huge contract for big guns. I wrote my chief rather bluntly to inquire whether my job was to keep good relations between the U. S. A. and South American nations, or to act as a government sales agent for the Steel crowd. The chief wrote back

that he would like an explanation of a report which had been made to him regarding some social indiscretions of mine involving, he believed, three poker games and two ladies. It made me pretty hot."

"I suppose in your diplomatic way you advised him to go to the devil, with assurances of your distinguished consideration?"

"I did not. I wrote to the Senator, my patron saint, explaining in detail about the poker games—even describing the hands. The Senator plays a good game himself and I knew he would enjoy the story. Also I referred to the question of the ladies, explaining that I did not wish to make them the subject of official reports, especially as one was the Senator's cousin, whom he had asked me to look out for. Furthermore, I explained to the Senator about the Steel Company's game and expressed my suspicion that its agents were poisoning the Department against me. The Senator loves the Steel crowd! They have been against him in every election. I'll guarantee he had a warm interview with my chief. Anyhow my next information was a call to come home. Probably I'll be transferred to Siam. Let's go out in the lobby and I'll show you my bodyguard."

We lounged around the lobby for a few minutes and Halliwell pointed out to me a swarthy man loafing in front of the cigar counter and a hatchet-faced dyspeptic who was sitting near the outer door.

"Those are my faithful trailers," he said. "I don't know whether they are South American agents

or hired by the Steel crowd. They're both interested in me. Maybe it's a joint employment. Where is your fellow?"

"I don't see him," I said. "Probably a fresh man is on the job."

"Suppose we take a walk out toward the monument," suggested Halliwell. "We'll see how large a crowd follows us."

We wandered away across the common toward the Potomac and by taking unfrequented paths gradually identified three men who kept us company at some distance: Gene's two satellites and a short heavy-set man with a round face and little staring eyes. Then we returned to the hotel and Gene came up to my room. I had told him about my work and he had begun to evolve his scheme for relieving me of this annoyance.

"The chances are," he announced, after much talk, "that these birds will try to frame something on you—even if they haven't orders to do so. A detective must deliver the goods—even though the goods are counterfeit. They'll try to mix you up in some sort of scandal. The easiest way to get rid of a troublesome public official is to pull some private disgrace on him in the newspapers. The great American public will swallow a lot of rottenness from a public man if he lives at the Y. M. C. A. and is kind to his wife and mother. Witness the example of one of your Senators. You know he lives at the Y. M. C. A. down here. What if he does represent the Meat Trust instead of the people? What if his

seat was bought and paid for? He lives at the Y. M. C. A.! He doesn't smoke or swear or drink! He must be a good man! But you, old top, you're one of these fool idealists who want to serve the people. You are just one of the romantic sort that might take two drinks too many or pay too much attention to a pretty girl—and if the public ever found that out—why, good-night for you! Off with his head!"

"Oh I'm not going to do anything foolish," I protested. "I'm respectably married. I love my wife. I'm working hard."

"Yes, yes," he stopped me. "I know you are a little lily-white angel—but—it's just lily-white angels that fall into traps. Now here is my scheme. We'll prepare the trap. You will fall into it. The enemy will rush in to expose you—photographers, newspaper men and all that—and then we will set up a loud ha! ha! and announce that it is all a fraud. Then we'll tell these blackmailers to quit bothering you or we'll expose the whole dirty business ourselves. If we once catch them they'll never dare to pull anything on you afterwards—even if they really caught you redhanded in some naughty little game."

"The adventure appeals to me," I admitted. "This work is a good deal of a bore. It makes me hot to think of those smooth, oily lawyers arguing so politely with me before the Commission—and then I suppose getting reports on my daily habits from their hired crooks. I'd like to teach them a lesson. But I must be sure first who is hiring my shadows."

"I'll bet I can find out in a hurry—maybe by lunch time," laughed Halliwell. "Can you stay here? I'll call you in an hour."

But Gene had more trouble getting the information than he expected. It was not until I joined him at dinner the next evening that he made good his boast.

We met in the basement grill of one of the smaller, less crowded hotels. We took a table remote from eavesdroppers and as soon as the waiter had our orders Gene burst forth with the tale which his sparkling eyes had promised.

"It's better than I hoped," he said. "I've got all the inside story. There's a young fellow who acted as a sort of secretary-valet to me when I was stationed in Mexico. He is a Spanish-French-Italian mixture with all the romanticism, trickery and personal loyalty you might expect of the combination. He's working for an agency here in Washington. He speaks six languages, so is very useful to them. He would do anything short of murder for me. I never asked him to do that—so perhaps I'm unfair in limiting his devotion. I couldn't find him yesterday. But I located him to-day. He was so glad to see me I was afraid he'd kiss me—and we were in a very public place.

"His agency is following you. It's one of the two big ones and I was sure it would be his or the other big one, if the railroads were behind it. I have a friend in the other who is just about as reliable, so you see why I felt confident. Well, Maxy was on

you himself one day, taking the place of an operative who was sick—so he knows the instructions. Then he's talked with the others so he knows about all there is to know."

"Who's doing it?" I demanded.

"The reports on you go to a man named Jared Thurman."

"The sleek old hypocrite!" I exclaimed. "He's the local lawyer for the railroad group, General Attorney for the Association. He was a Congressman for years, then became a railroad lobbyist. He's always sweet as cream to me."

"The instructions are," continued Gene—"I'll wait a minute till the waiter gets through. . . . The instructions are to report where you go and what you do, with particular care to find out with whom you have any conversations and also to report carefully on any meetings with women, and in case of any special interests in the female line to telephone the head office at once for further instructions. Have you a friend named Grayson?"

"Yes, he's my associate counsel."

"Well, whenever he's in town they furnish him an escort also."

"So they think they'll get me mixed up with women, do they?" I growled.

"Oh, Maxy tells me they pretty nearly had something on you one day."

"They did not," I protested, feeling my face grow red in front of Gene's grin. Why is it that an innocent man will look so guilty under unjust accusation?

"It seems that you picked up a girl in front of a movie theatre on Ninth Street, one day when it was raining, and rode off with her in a taxi. But the operative couldn't get another cab in time to follow and so he lost you."

Then my face must have shone red, for Gene burst into a loud cackle of laughter.

"I remember that well," I explained. "If I had known I was being followed I certainly would not have done it. I was out for a walk and it began pouring. I stopped a moment in the theatre entrance for shelter. A taxi came up and I rushed out to it. I got there just ahead of a girl—and a pretty girl too. She appealed to the driver to take her, but he said I was there first. I didn't want to leave her in the rain, in distress——"

"And so beautiful"—murmured Halliwell.

"Yes—and so beautiful——" I repeated doggedly, "so I told her that I had to get back to my hotel for an appointment but if she was not going too far and didn't mind my company I'd take her home first. She gave me one searching look, evidently decided I was safe, told the driver an address and hopped in. The address was that big apartment hotel—you know—Stoneleigh Court. I didn't ask her name and she didn't volunteer it. I left her there and have never seen her since."

"Stoneleigh Court," mused Halliwell. "That's where Irma lives."

"And a few hundred other people," I added. "Who is Irma?"

"Irma? Irma is . . . You know that sounds like the sort of thing Irma would do. Was this girl very pretty?"

"The little I saw of her I should say she was."

"The kind you would like to see again?" he quizzed.

"Yes I would," was my defiant reply. "She had a lovely voice."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Gene. "Irma is just the girl. I don't mean she's the girl you met. Probably not. But she is just the girl for my scheme. Irma shall be Delilah. I know she'd love to play the part. Do you like dark hair and deep slumbrous eyes, half hidden depths of passion and all that sort of thing?"

"Not particularly," I answered slowly. "I've always rather fallen for blondes."

"Well, if anybody could change your taste it would be Irma Conway," said Gene. "I gave up blondes forever the night I met Irma. The blondes all looked pale and feeble after Irma. And arms and throat and shoulders! Oh my dear, dear boy—when you see Irma in an evening gown—perhaps it would be more exact to say—out of an evening gown—you'll be glad I picked her for the heroine of this little drama. Really I don't know that it's fair to your nice blonde wife for me to expose you to Irma."

"Don't you worry about my wife. I'll write her all about this siren before you ever introduce me to her."

"Yes, I know you will. The question is, will you write her all about the siren *after* I introduce you?"

There is no use spoiling the story of Halliwell's drama by giving in advance all the disillusioning detail of its preparation. I wrote down shortly afterward the events of that memorable evening when we acted it into history. I wanted to make sure of preserving an exact record. I might have found immediate use for it but in any event it seemed worth while saving as an entertaining episode in this rambling story of my life, which I find so much fun in writing down from time to time and which may seem so dull to those who, I fondly imagine, may care some day to read it.

CHAPTER XIII

The Trap Opens

THE narrow three-story brick house, known as "Mamá Rabou's" bears no sign to advertise its hospitality. The cooking and the excellent discretion of Madame and her never visible husband have given it a reputation which has traveled far. In the basement is a long thin dining room containing a long thin table covered with oil cloth, on both sides of which chairs are placed close together, thus making for early acquaintance among guests who may arrive as strangers. At the end of the room, in the front bay window, is a piano. This is the "bohemian" part of the establishment. Impecunious writers, musicians and other persons lacking the commercial mind and its fruits, come here to enjoy a limited but appetizing table d'hôte, the quality of which is (or was once) enhanced for the uncritical diner by a small bottle of "red ink." Dinner is served promptly at six-thirty. At the end of the meal it is probable that someone will play the piano and those who sing, or enjoy the appearance of singing, will gather around the piano and vie in harmonic efforts. At nine-thirty, however, if any unacquainted with the rules of the house show signs of lingering,

Mama Rabou will enter briskly and begin to turn out the lights, saying pleasantly: "Good-night, ladies and gentlemen. Come again, please." He would be dull indeed who would not recognize in this a hint that it is time to go.

Upstairs what was once a front parlor is now a more select dining room. Here there are small tables wearing table cloths. The young man whose companion shrinks from the publicity of the long table downstairs, or who desires to monopolize her society, will seek this room. But he will do well to come early because Mama Rabou only serves once in an evening and when the tables are full she will admit no more.

"Come to-morrow, please," she suggests with pleasant firmness. "Come early, please. Sorry, but I cannot serve any more to-night."

However, these two rooms are not the limit of Mama Rabou's accommodations. Behind the locked double doors at the rear of the parlor dining room is a sort of back parlor where private dining parties of not less than four or more than ten will be entertained by special arrangement. This room is the main cause of the reputation of the house for discretion. Its closed doors never give a hint to the common clientele of the character or personnel of the party which has sought and paid for this privacy, though sounds of their merriment may stimulate an interest. Its two large windows look out upon a blank wall so that on a warm evening they can be left open without fear of publicity. A door at the

rear allows the waiter to serve the meal quickly by means of a narrow stairway leading down to the kitchen. A special dinner of supreme quality will be provided in this room, with wines suited to any extravagance of taste.

One Thursday afternoon Halliwell and I acquired rights to this private dining room for the following Saturday evening. It was officially described as Parlor A. Halliwell and Mama Rabou did all the talking. They raced their French verbs and pronouns again each other for half an hour, while I stood by and tried to smile intelligently whenever madame glanced in my direction. In the end I laid two twenty-dollar bills in her hand as an earnest of the soundness of our intentions. A large share of Halliwell's conversation I had guessed to be directed toward insuring the presence of a particular vintage champagne, which I judged from Mama Rabou's persistent "mais oui" and acrobatic eyelashes might be difficult to procure, so I watched her reception of the money with some trepidation. I feared that perhaps I should have brought along the family diamonds. But she seemed satisfied.

"Now we'll put on our open-fronts," said Halliwell, as we walked back to the hotel, "and call upon the fascinating Mrs. Conway. You're sure our bodyguard have been following us."

"Yes, I've seen two of them at least. One is my snub-nosed friend."

"Very good, very good," he chortled. "I had a great time explaining to Mama Rabou that if any-

one tried to pump information out of her to be sure to let him know that you, Monsieur Merrill, are giving a little dinner Saturday. She was insulted at first. She never talked about her patrons! That was none of her business, and so forth. Discretion is her habit of a lifetime. I told her we had a little joke to play on someone and she must be a little indiscreet, just this one time. She nearly wept but finally promised."

"I'm somewhat embarrassed over Mrs. Conway's part in this. It seems a rotten mess to bring a perfect stranger into."

"Lord bless you! She's tickled to death. She's no stranger to me. She and my sister were in the same class at Smith. She visited in our home before she married Conway. I made more love to her with less effect than to any girl I ever met. She doesn't care for my type. She likes a man big and broad and husky, sort of literary pugilist looking. That was Conway. He was about your build. Poor devil —he got pneumonia and went out in a hurry. That's the trouble with you big fellows. Skinny hollow chests like me live through everything. Hope you're not susceptible to colds!"

"No, I'm not, old crêpe hanger, and I exercise all the time. There aren't two pounds of fat on me."

"Well, anyhow you'll make a hit with Irma. Maybe you have already."

"Did you ask her about the taxicab episode?"

"No, I forgot it completely. She always makes

me forget everything except how wonderful she looks. Really it arouses my jealousy to cast you for the hero of this play. I'd like to fill that part myself."

"I don't feel like a hero. I feel like a fool or a cad or a silly boy or something humiliating."

As I stopped at the taxicab desk in the hotel I saw Maxy lounging within earshot. There was a faint gleam of greeting in his dark eyes, but he gave no noticeable sign of recognition. I ordered a car for half-past-six in quite a loud voice.

When I returned to the lobby in my evening clothes Gene was waiting for me. In a far corner I saw my snub-nosed sleuth and Halliwell's dark-faced follower sitting together. Evidently they had joined forces.

We drove over to Stoneleigh Court, observing with comfortable amusement that another car was following us. In Mrs. Conway's apartment we met a solemn-appearing middle-aged woman to whom Halliwell introduced me. It seems that Miss Stevenson, who lived with Mrs. Conway, had a position in the Department of Agriculture. She wore that look of hopeless content that seems to characterize the permanent members of the Government service in Washington. They have no particular fear or hope of the future. Their positions are exceptionally secure. Promotion is either very gradual from inferior pettiness to superior pettiness, or else they get into a blind alley from which death is the only exit. Really they seem to me the saddest

yet least pitiful individuals, I have ever met. The Washington face! If you once see it with an imaginative eye you will never forget it.

Miss Stevenson excused herself shortly, with some muffled excuse about "helping Irma."

After a short wait, Irma came in. She was far more beautiful than I had imagined, also taller than I had expected, although by no means a large woman, just large enough to be called—magnificent. She wore a gown of soft caressing silk, almost black in color. I think it was what is called midnight blue. It was embroidered with sequins, giving a mermaid like enticement to the smooth lines of her figure. After one glance at her face I abruptly turned my eyes downward to avoid a too obvious stare of admiration. Then the grace of her white arm outstretched in greeting and the lure of her half-revealed bosom drove my glance back again toward the eyes that had first confused me. Her hair was drawn in thick waves away from a rather low forehead; but although black and luxuriant it did not seem heavy. There were reddish glints in the finer strands that escaped around her ears and curled at the base of her shapely head. Her white throat was flawless, not a suggestion of surplus flesh yet fully rounded. All these things I noted rapidly and then, with an actual effort, again looked her in the eyes. They were deeply set and shaded with long curling lashes. The irises seemed almost black, but, as I drew nearer, they appeared less forbidding, more of a lustrous brown, sensitive and appealing—eyes whose

wish it would be hard to deny—and whose displeasure it would be difficult to endure.

She was saying something and her voice was warm and mellow like her eyes.

"I've seldom been so curious to meet anyone, Mr. Merrill. Gene has planned such a charming series of parties for two people who have never met!"

I heard myself speaking as though it were someone else, a sensation that sometimes follows on too much alcohol. For the moment I felt drunk and wondered if I looked that way. But as I spoke my mind grew clearer.

"Pardon me if I seem a little stunned. If I were Gene I should say that you had overwhelmed me, but not being good at pretty speeches, I'll explain it another way. You said we had never met. But I think we have. In fact I think I brought you home in a taxi one rainy day. It was dark and I didn't see you plainly and so I didn't realize"—I fumbled for words.

"You didn't realize what a goddess you had entertained," interjected Halliwell. "You are certainly stunning to-night, Irma, and my little friend is stunned. I don't think it fair to burst on poor Rodney in full blaze of glory that way. Venus rising from the waves of a Paris gown. You should have revealed yourself more gradually—say—come in first in an apron, and wearing a veil!"

If my face was not burning red it felt that way. Even Irma's cheeks flushed lightly. But a woman can take strong praise without visible confusion,

especially one who is truly beautiful. She has had plenty of practice.

"I'm not going to protest Gene's talk, Mrs. Conway," I said. "Protest would be useless for stopping him and anyhow I guess he's right. I feel a bit confused, particularly because you have been asked to play a part in such a ridiculous adventure. Frankly, I should be less embarrassed with someone less—stunning. I'm afraid you would give a shocking appearance of reality to any pretense that I had become infatuated. Also, I'm a little scared for fear that under such a stimulus I may overact my part."

"And you said he couldn't flatter the ladies," she remarked gayly to Halliwell. "He warned me, Mr. Merrill, that you would probably try to reform me; he said that was your idea of making love to a woman. But then I knew he never told the truth so I wasn't really afraid."

Gene met my indignation with a high pitched laugh.

"You remember Portia Hamlet," he accused. "When I tried to kiss her she said you had told her that promiscuous kissing was all wrong, that she should treasure her affections for the great gift to the one she really loved. I never quite forgave you for withering that young flower."

"Gene delights to remind me of all the raw ideas that I annoyed him with, long years ago, Mrs. Conway. He got over some of his illusions earlier than I did. But he still possesses the illusion that he is the world's greatest lover," I added maliciously.

"That is one illusion that I never had—about either him or myself."

"Touché!" exclaimed Mrs. Conway. "I think we had better go and find Gene's alleged cousin before you two get to quarreling."

"She's a real cousin," insisted Halliwell, "cross my heart and hope to die!"

What Gene's cousin looked like I cannot tell. We picked her up on the way to the Chevy Chase Country Club. I have a vague recollection of a small, thin, vivacious young woman, whose name was Knowlton, I believe, who talked to Halliwell in an undertone, with much giggling laughter, all through the evening. After dinner we danced, and on the rare occasions when I danced with her some sprig always cut in before we were half around the hall. Then I would slip away to a quiet corner where I could think about Mrs. Conway or go through a silly self-deception of pretending not to think about her.

When I danced with her—that is, with Irma—I talked very little. If I have a good partner I don't care much about chattering through a dance and I soon found that she had the same idea. Fortunately she was not acquainted with the young vultures who clustered around the ball-room and continually cut in the dances, whereby a popular girl never had more than thirty seconds consecutively with one partner. Never did that seem to me a more asinine method of destroying the pleasure of a dance than that evening when I feared at the outset that I should

be allowed very little time with my beautiful companion. I blessed the fact soon demonstrated that she was a stranger like myself and I remarked upon my good fortune.

"I've been in Washington only a few months," she said, "and only once before at Chevy Chase. I'm glad I don't know anybody because I'm northern myself and I don't like the southern style of cutting in any more than you do. I should dislike it especially to-night because I want to get a little acquainted with you, since we are to be disgraced together so soon."

"Oh, that is all over," I answered. We were sitting out a dance in a secluded corner and I had just come to the decision. "I couldn't think of dragging you into an affair of that kind. Putting it bluntly I like you far too well and I think you are far too attractive a person to be mixed up in such a thing."

She did not answer, but sat looking at me out of half-shut eyes with a questioning expression; and I stumbled on.

"I might as well try to be frank, even though I make myself ridiculous. When this adventure was planned you were just a name to me and the idea didn't seem so outrageous. But now two things have occurred. You are a real human being, a beautiful woman with a past and a future. I don't know much about the past but I can't see how this business could help your future—and it might do you great harm. A woman's reputation is nothing to trifle with. In the second place—I find it hard to say this but I'm

going to do it—if I were not a married man I should be head over heels in love with you already. Under the circumstances I don't see how I can risk pretending to fall in love with you. That part needn't worry you, because I can assure you that your slightest frown would stop me; but it worries me because I really try to be—respectable—and even if all other prohibitions failed me, I wouldn't care to make a fool of myself."

I stopped, feeling particularly foolish. Still she sat silent for a moment. Then she smiled, a lovely smile, not mocking but very friendly. Impulsively she put her hand on my arm and I tingled at the light touch.

"I'm glad you don't know how to make love," she said. "No great lover has ever flattered me as deeply as you have just now, and several great lovers have really exerted themselves to do it."

"Really," I protested, "I'm not trying to flatter you——

"That is just why you are so flattering," she interrupted. "You display an appalled dread lest quite against your will I may charm you out of all discretion. Now what could be more flattering to a woman than to give her such a sense of power and to pay such a tribute to her—let's call it—personality? Of course if you were just a boy or a weakling it would be different, but when a mature man, who has earned scars, who has fallen in and out of love, who has married an attractive wife—

when such a stout-heart collapses on the doorstep I have a right to be flattered."

"I'm feeling more foolish every minute," I declared. "The only wisdom I have left is in my legs—they're urging me to run away."

That made her laugh; and restored a little of my lost poise.

"You are interesting me immensely," murmured the siren, leaning a little closer. "You're such a funny combination of sophistication and boyishness. You seem to be stumbling around the tennis court and yet somehow you manage to keep returning the ball."

"Oh, it's an art," I replied with mock egotism. "It's a great art!"

"I'm not entirely sure that it isn't," she said, further heating my already fevered self-esteem. "However, I'll promise you one thing. You are not going to run away from your Delilah. You agreed with Gene that I should be Delilah and Delilah I am going to be. Talk it over with Gene. He knows enough of my past follies and future hopes to assure you that you will do me no harm."

I did talk it over with Gene in my room, to which we returned at the end of the evening. He reassured me considerably.

"Of course, you'd have scruples, old dear," he taunted me, "especially when you found the lady so beautiful. I notice the more beautiful they are the more moral you get. Downright perversity it seems to me. There's some sense in being moral with the

homely ones. They need morality for comfort. But how would you like to be a beautiful woman, all fixed up by nature for a man trap, and then be surrounded with a bunch of self-blinded men? Sheer waste of natural resources!

"However, about Irma—she had a little money of her own and Conway left her some more. She doesn't need a husband to support her and doesn't want one. Men have been flinging themselves at her feet for so many years that she gets no thrill out of adoration at all, at all. She had a gay young life before she married and a pretty speedy one during that brief episode. Now she wants to do something more amusing than to frivol. She has a wild strain, Irish romanticism I guess. She wants real adventure. She did a little very high-grade detective work—secret service is a nicer name—in New York city. Then there was a chance to land something quite big in that line down here, so she came to Washington. The head of the agency that is following you had something to do with it. Like many another he lost his head over Irma; worked against her business career because he had other plans for her. I don't know the whole story but it would give her an inexpressible joy to make monkeys of that crowd. You're offering her a chance that she would give up six months of life to get. I didn't know why she was so particularly keen to do this until she explained."

"There isn't any chance that she is really working with the agency, is there?" I suggested cautiously.

"No there isn't and your infatuated little heart doesn't think so, either," laughed Halliwell. "You're just trying to make me think you are not swept away by Irma. But, believe me, I know the signs too well. I've seen it happen too often. You are twenty miles out at sea already and if I didn't know that Irma would bring you safe back home I'd telegraph your poor dear wife."

I used up a good deal of coarse language trying to convince Gene that he was wrong—but finally gave it up and told him it was time for him to go home.

"I want to go to bed and dream about Irma," I said with belligerent emphasis.

"Shameless!" he mocked me at the door. "Reveling in his shame!"

He was wrong, however. I felt ashamed—so much so that before retiring I wrote a long letter to my wife and told her all about Irma—that is, all the facts about our plan, our meeting and that Mrs. Conway was a very good-looking woman of the brunette type; of course I never enthused much over brunettes, but she was a distinctly handsome woman of that type. I tried to make all the material elements of the situation as clear as though Mary had been in Washington herself. The spiritual elements —so to speak—I could not analyze sufficiently to discuss intelligently with myself. Naturally I knew I could not explain them to Mary. So I did not try.

CHAPTER XIV

The Trap Closes

FRIDAY night saw Irma again. This time I called on her alone—although accompanied at a discreet distance by my faithful sleuth. I stayed rather late, ostensibly to intensify the interest of my follower and his clients. To be honest, I was glad of the excuse. I have never enjoyed an evening more. We talked a great deal. We sang a few songs together. She plays the piano very well and I am supposed to have a fairly good voice. I only hope she had half as good a time as I did. Certainly she seemed to enjoy talking over our plans for Saturday. But I should be very conceited to imagine that she found half as much pleasure in my society as I found merely in listening to her voice and watching the lights and shadows play over her alluring eyes. I won't try to describe her eyes any further because it isn't what they are but what they do that is important. They fascinate and subjugate me in a way that gives me an intense sensation of pleasure mingled with positive terror.

There were times when were were sitting rather near together, when she would give me a full sweet look that was far more heady than the most powerful liquor I have ever swallowed. I had a physical

sensation of choking and an unreasoning impulse to drag myself down before her, to press my cheek against her satin slippers and to babble some sort of adoring nonsense.

I wish I could make it plain that I, Rodney Merrill, leaning back in a comfortable chair and exuding ironic comments on attempted public service, did not desire to do this thing. But inside this fairly self-possessed individual had awakened an alien person with whom I had only a faint acquaintance—a person dominated by a passion to serve passion, by a desire to make himself a slave to an overpowering love—a person who has been invisible and unfelt through most of my years, and only half-visible and half-sensed in brief intoxicated moments.

But when this woman looked full into my eyes it seemed as though her glance went clear through Rodney Merrill into this inner person, awoke him and summoned him to do her will. And if he gave himself—what would she do with him? That terrified me. I knew what she could do. She could trample him under her pretty feet if she wished and he would bless her and enjoy the pain. Somehow that did not scare me. It seemed too sweet a humiliation to be feared. But I knew in the depths of the vanity of Rodney Merrill that what I dreaded was that she would scorn this slave gift of worship. The alien I yearned to offer all, but the familiar I kept whispering, "Fool! Fool! Fool!"

. . . . .

Now I am going to stop right here and say something in defense of my feeling this way and of my writing it down. There are two kinds of people who may criticise. There are those who have never known the possible strength of human passion. For them I am sorry, if they are now too old to learn. If they are young probably they will not criticise. There are others who have known, but are ashamed, and add the sin of hypocrisy to the sin of being ashamed that they have ever drunk deep of life. There may be a third kind of critic, those who have known, who profess not to be ashamed, but who assert that such things shouldn't be talked about publicly. These are not ignorant or hypocritical. They are self-deceivers, for, though they deny it, they are ashamed of knowing what they know. I'm naturally a bit of a hypocrite and self-deceiver. I am ashamed. But I am forcing myself, just as far as my Puritan ancestors will permit, to write an honest story of an honest—even though a shameful passion. Because honest—though shameful—passions play a great part in a great many lives—and how can one seek the purpose of life as I am consciously seeking it—as all of us consciously or unconsciously are seeking it, unless one faces the facts of living? Surely if damnation waits for any man it should wait for one who pretends to write of life and thus in some measure influences the lives of others, and who deliberately evades the facts. It is bad enough to live shams. There is no excuse for writing them.

Let me make my motives clear, once and for all. I do not seek to excuse or to palliate my wrong doings or my mistakes. Least of all would I glorify my errors so as to give either the sinner or the sinning a romantic attraction. But what is right and wrong; and where is the end of folly and the beginning of wisdom? Just because the pretense of such infinite knowledge is ludicrous, I pray that I may avoid sticking little labels on the pictures I try to draw. I might see a noble life with a chapter of sordid misery at the end. Should I call it, "The Reward of Virtue," and earn the reputation of a cynic? I might see a lying scoundrel accumulate a fortune and live to a ripe old age surrounded by a loving family. Should I call it, "The Wages of Sin"? Perhaps the noble man was a fool and the scoundrel full of wisdom. All I know is that labeling lives is a futile bore—but trying to understand how and why men and women live and think as they do is at least interesting. It isn't self-esteem that makes me interested in studying myself. I'm not worth studying as an exception but I am as a type. It is because I'm sufficiently normal so that my experiences are common to millions of other men and because I know so much more (and so much less) about myself, that self-analysis interest me and may at least amuse others—if it is honest.

. . . . .

Therefore I confess the passion that Irma Conway roused in me. Whether for good or evil it is a great

experience. Under its influence I wing my way to heights of joy I had not imagined. I crawl into depths of shame and pain that I had never suffered. There is a glory in the sunshine, a tang in the cool air, a lightness in my sense of motion, hitherto unknown. And I pay bitterly for this delight, in a despair that there is so little of it, that there can be so little of it in the long, long days before me. The boyish illusions that might make this experience all gladness, are gone. I have no impossible hopes to cheer me, no thought that if somehow I were free or could obtain freedom and lay siege to Irma and capture her for my own, then life would be one long sweet song. Of course if I were free the adventure would be a glorious one. Failure at the end would not destroy the joy in having played the game. Success might prolong it for a little while.

But I can't vividly imagine marrying Irma—and certainly I can't imagine her caring to be married to me. I don't really desire to marry Irma. I only wish to be in love with Irma, and to devote my days to making love to Irma, and to have Irma want me to be in love with her. I am quite convinced that Mary and I live together more happily than could Irma and I. Mary is real and solid and habitual —comfortable qualities in a partner for the everyday business of living. Irma summons me to dream and to venture. She brings thrills never stirred by wine or music. She brings hints of a purpose in living, because she lifts me out of a body that I know is growing old and is going to die, and relights

the youthful fire of illusion that I once called my soul.

I should like to write more about how Irma makes me feel—but I think it is time that I went back to my story.

. . . . .

Pillar Grayson came to town Friday evening. Late Saturday morning Gene and Pillar and I and Irma drove to the Union Station and met a very attractive young woman whom I shall call Grace. She greeted Gene with marked affection and the five of us made a very gay luncheon party in one of the conspicuous hotels. I may mention that through Maxy we had learned of the intense interest which the two detective agencies were taking in my attentions to Irma. They had been informed of the dinner arrangements made at Mama Rabou's and had made plans for adding to the entertainment of the evening.

Our jolly quintet played around Washington all afternoon, not making it too difficult for the shadows to follow our fool's progress. As daylight faded we left Irma and Grace at Stoneleigh Court. Halliwell and I went to our respective rooms to dress, after which we called for the ladies at Stoneleigh and escorted them to Mama Rabou's. In the meantime Pillar Grayson "dolled up decolleté," as he described it, and sought out an obscure boarding house where he acquired the companionship of a dashing young woman—well, young looking, at any rate—with vivid red hair and deep blue eyes, one

who would attract notice in any company. If any sleuth had made inquiries at the boarding house he would have been informed that Miss McCarthy had just gone out. Whether inquiry was made I do not know.

As I surveyed this hilarious six around the inviting table set with the very best of the Rabou silver, china and glassware, I observed how utterly unworthy the men appeared to be of such companionship.

"I'll guarantee," I remarked, "that the waiter will wonder how such a set of men ever managed to acquire three such marvelous women. Here's old Pillar Grayson with his gray hair and general grandfatherly appearance, Gene Halliwell hiding his haggard cheeks behind a moth-eaten beard, and I, the youngest in the crowd, half bald and rheumatic —all of us imposing our middle-aged wits and our renovated enthusiasms on three dreams of female youth and beauty. It isn't right. We ought to leave such charmers to the men of their own generation."

"Nonsense!" roared Pillar. "The younger men can't afford such companionship. A man must reach years of indiscretion before he can provide for the female of the species in the style to which she wishes to be accustomed. Look at Miss McCarthy—it took years of hard labor in my profession before I reached the place where I could afford to bring her half-way across the country to take part, clad like an Egyptian queen, in an evening such as this."

"You shameless old reprobate!" cried the lady addressed, laughing shrilly, "you didn't bring me half across the country. I paid my own carfare and furthermore I buy all my own clothes out of the allowance which papa gives me."

The true identity of Miss McCarthy being known to all present—although not to any possible eavesdroppers outside the half-open windows—this sally aroused much laughter, above which Pillar could be heard shouting:

"Aileen, Aileen, when you put on that baby pout of innocence you make me forget all my dignity. I shall really have to kiss you—on the spot!"

This he did with considerable enthusiasm, whereat Gene promptly embraced the somewhat shrinking Grace. I turned with mocking inquiry toward Irma, who was sitting on my right, and remarked:

"It seems to be your turn next."

"Must I?" she said leaning toward me with a tantalizing smile.

The blood rushed to my forehead. The noise in the room receded, though I could hear Pillar saying something. But all I really knew was the nearness of dark eyes in whose caressing depths I might be happily engulfed.

There was a knock on the door and the discreet waiter slid in with a loaded tray.

"Saved," mocked Irma. "Saved by a waiter."

"That's only in the first act," I threatened. "In the last act there will be no waiter."

"Oh yes there will be," she retorted. "I shall still be left waiting."

As dinner progressed and the glasses were emptied and refilled persistently the merriment of our little party rose dangerously. The incorrigible Gene devoted himself more and more intensively to Irma, taking an obvious, wicked pleasure in my dissatisfaction. This left Grace, his true partner, free to entangle Pillar, who showed an increasing readiness to engross himself with her, thus leaving Aileen to me. Without rudeness I had to abandon efforts to separate Gene and Irma and to try to be attentive to Aileen. Not only was I annoyed at losing Irma's society but I feared our actors were forgetting their parts in the little drama now rapidly approaching a climax.

When coffee and liqueurs were being served I found an excuse to wander around the table and whisper a few warning words, which, combined with the coffee, had some effect in restoring the original combination to working order. Knowing the plans of the detective agencies we were assured that they would not spring their trap until they felt they had their victims at the greatest disadvantage. After dinner Grace played the piano and we danced a little and sang a little. Then Gene loudly ordered in more wine and we indulged in considerable apparent drinking, although the imminent crisis had a very sobering effect on all of us and there was much less wine consumed than one would have judged from the noise and the constant clink of

glasses. It was probably about ten o'clock when we set the scene for the last act.

Irma and I were sitting on the side of the table opposite the windows. On my left sat Pillar Grayson with the dashing but now somewhat tousled Miss McCarthy, lolling in his lap. With one arm around his neck, her red hair tumbling about her ears and a half-empty champagne glass in her hand, with Pillar's gray hair falling over his forehead and his crumpled shirt front bursting from its studs, they were a pretty maudlin-looking couple. On Irma's right was Halliwell, supporting in similar fashion the high-spirited Grace. There was nothing maudlin in their appearance, but as a living picture of Mr. and Miss Bacchus about to smash the glassware and dance on the table, they were a complete success.

"One last song," boomed Grayson, "and then we must be going or Mama Rabou won't let us ever come again." Then he began in a somewhat thick voice to sing, "Good-Night, Ladies," and we all joined in.

Irma and I sat close together but with our arms before us on the table. There was not the slightest appearance of impropriety in our position—but our companions amply supplied that element of the picture. They certainly looked disreputable. As the song began I waited for the footlights. This was to be the last act, if our plans went right. Each word rolled out slowly from Pillar and the rest followed his time—but nothing happened as we sang the verse:

"Good-night, ladies,
Good-night, ladies,
Good-night, ladies,
We're going to leave you now."

We began the chorus:

"Merrily we roll along, roll along, roll along——"

Then came the crash!

There was a roar at the open windows as two flashlights went off in succession. After the boom of the flashlights the doorbell began to ring. We could hear scurrying steps in the hall. A frightened waiter thrust his face in at the door. He saw us sitting as though frozen to our seats. Through the window leaped a man, two men, three men—four! One ran out into the hall and, over the loud protests of Mama Rabou, opened the front door, returning with more men.

Now there were at least eight men in the room; and behind them Mama Rabou and two servants peered in from the doorway. We had finally jumped up, the women shrinking back, the men smoothing their shirt fronts and nervously brushing the lint of napkins from their black clothes.

"Welcome to our party," said Grayson. "I don't know who invited all you gentlemen, but someone ought to welcome you, I'm sure. Is this a delegation or just a mob? Have you a chairman who can explain what this is all about?"

A broad-faced man with thin lips, a thin nose and

narrow eyes, who was standing beside my snub-nosed detective, stepped forward.

"You are Mr. Pillar Grayson?" he asked in a twanging voice.

Grayson nodded.

"This is Mr. Rodney Merrill?" he continued pointing to me, "and this is Mr. Eugene Halliwell?"

"That's correct," answered Grayson, "and now suppose you introduce yourself and your friends."

"Just a moment," said broad-face importantly. "I was about to ask the names of the ladies next."

"Well," said Grayson, slowly, "if the ladies will excuse me I will state that that is none of your damn business."

"Took the words right out of my mouth," said Miss McCarthy in a thin plaintive little voice.

Two or three of our visitors promptly made notes on pads of paper they were carrying.

"Ah, we have gentlemen of the press with us, I see," commented Grayson. "I'm somewhat surprised. Most newspaper men I know are gentlemen. I wouldn't have expected to find them running around with jail birds like Connery."

The broad-faced man was visibly upset. Our party was equally amazed at this sudden turn. Grayson glanced at me.

"The leader of this little party is Mr. James Connery, Rodney," he said. "The last time I saw him he was on his way to jail for sending a blackmailing letter through the mails. That was years ago. Now he calls himself a detective and works a

safer line than individual blackmail. He blackmails for big respectable institutions like railroads and other public utility corporations."

Connery's newspaper aids noticeably shrank away from him during this attack. Even the snub-nosed man and the men I had seen trailing Halliwell looked uncomfortable.

"Strong words," sang out Connery, with a snarl, "strong words, Mr. Grayson, but you are trying to get away with a lot yourself, I'd say. We got a pretty little photograph of you—a married man with that lady there sitting on your knee. I don't have to take your sass either. I've got nothing to say to you. I'm not trying to get anything out of you. I just wanted to identify you and your friends to the newspaper boys, so they can get a good story if they want it. I'm not working for any railroad either. There's a reform organization that pays for getting the evidence to put places of this kind out of business in Washington. I'm working for them. See?"

Mama Rabou in the back of the crowd began a voluble defense of her establishment.

"Don't worry, Mama Rabou," called out Grayson. "There will never be one word of this in any newspaper, or any evidence presented in any court, unless we decide to send a few railroad men to jail for blackmail! You boys," he continued, turning to the newspaper men, "have been brought here under false pretenses. I know you wouldn't have taken part in such a dirty business if you hadn't been

lied to. There isn't a reputable paper in the whole country that would print a pure blackmail story even if it was good news. If any of you are unfortunate enough to work for a paper that would print the story, I'll tell you right now to tell your editors that that paper will go broke in a year paying the damages in six libel suits. There are six of us here, you see."

"Just a minute, Mr. Grayson," said a young gloomy-faced fellow, who looked as though all his meals for ten years had disagreed with him. "The paper I work for isn't so darn particular as you may think; and as for libel suits—the day we don't get any we know we got out a poor paper the day before! You're a married man and Mr. Merrill's a married man and this party doesn't look so good. We boys haven't seen all the show, but the little I glimpsed from outside that window didn't look like a church sociable."

"Who invited you to come here?" I asked. "Who tipped this off to you as a story?"

"That's my business," he said defiantly.

"You'll find its our business before the evening is over," remarked Grayson. "But if you won't talk to us we don't care to talk to you. Go ahead and take notes until your hand is tired. You'll never get one line in your paper."

"Let me say a few words," said Gene, stepping forward. "I'm talking now to all you men as men. Some of you detectives are working for one agency and some for another. We know all about you. We may as well tell you newspaper men that these

agencies have been trying to ruin the three of us, and all because we are working for the public. Mr. Merrill and Mr. Grayson are fighting the railroads. They represent the State of Illinois. I've been fighting the Steel crowd. I represent the United States. We men have been doing our duty as we saw it. We may be all wrong but we've been fighting honestly for things we believe in and we've fought fair.

"The railroad men and the steel men may have been fighting for things they believe in. They are fighting for money. I know they certainly believe in that. Maybe they believe in something better than money though I doubt it sometimes. At any rate they haven't fought fair. They call themselves great business men and they fight with the weapons of crooks. They fight like men of the underworld of crime. They have used you men to follow us—not for information merely, but to get something on us, to get us in a position where still dirtier tools of theirs could blackmail us and try to make us betray our clients and become crooks like themselves. We've proved that. We've got the goods on you; and you haven't got them on us. If you gentlemen will wait long enough I'll show you the photographs you took, because we have them. We have copies of all your instructions. We have copies of the bills for this rotten work. We know who paid the bills. We can prove attempted blackmail from start to finish.

"We set a trap for you to-night and you walked into it. We have you and your employers in the

trap. Now you can go if you want. We're not interested in you, even as witnesses."

"Well, now look here," began Connery with a bullying bellow, "you try to carry things with a high hand."

"Ah, the jail bird is singing again," said Grayson, turning around from a whispered conversation he had been having with Aileen while Gene was speaking.

"That's a lie!" shouted Connery. "I never was in jail. You're trying to get away with that bunk along with the rest of it. You've got a nerve. You with a wife in Chicago and a red-headed woman sitting on your lap in Washington. You try to play the high and mighty!"

"Excuse me," interrupted a tall, thin young man who had just pushed his way forward. He carried the inevitable pad of paper that identified him as a reporter. "Mr. Merrill, you don't know me, but you know my brother in Chicago and I know about you. My name is MacMillan. I've been standing here feeling like a cad for twenty minutes. I don't think you men are bluffing and I think we all ought to be thrown out on our necks. I don't know what story was told my city editor, but it must have been a lie or he wouldn't have sent me out on this. If you can just clear up one or two things for me I'd like to leave and go back to the shop and tell them what I think of this assignment."

"I suppose," I answered, smiling, "you would like to know how Mr. Grayson expects to explain

this situation to his wife, or whether I intend to explain it to mine?"

"Well, not exactly that," he protested.

"It can be explained quite easily," I said. "Since we have found there is a gentleman in this crowd perhaps we can introduce him to the ladies."

"Wait a second," said Grayson, "before we introduce ourselves I want the name of everybody in this room and anyone who does not care to give his name can leave now."

"Well suppose anyone won't leave?" inquired the gloomy-faced dyspeptic.

"Oh, we'll have him arrested and carried out," answered Grayson. "I sent for the police some time ago. Don't worry, Mama Rabou," he added in answer to her wail. "I sent for a friendly policeman. I think I hear him coming."

Thumping steps in the outer hall were followed by the entrance of a burly man in uniform in tow of the small and very much excited Maxy.

"Which of you is Mr. Grayson?" rumbled the policeman.

"I am," said Pillar.

"The chief told me this young feller would bring me here and you might want help." He blinked around at the strange gathering and I noted that his glances lingered appreciatively on the ladies in our party.

"I was just calling the roll, officer, when you entered. These guests of ours were going to give us their names."

The roll call was quickly completed.

While Grayson was conducting it Maxy had been showing the rest of our party a picture taken by the detective photographer in the flashlight which had opened this last act. It certainly made us out to be a most disreputable crowd. Aileen and Grace went into shrieks of laughter over it and Irma was much amused.

"Now," said Grayson at the end of the roll call, "we will show you your little photograph, Mr. Connery. Your assistant Mr. Maxy has brought it to you."

Connery glared at Maxy.

"You double-crosser," he snarled.

Maxy smiled.

"I've just resigned, Connery," he said, "but tomorrow I think you'll be fired. I took the plates from Johnson just as you told me, and had them developed right away. Only one was any good. Oh, then I had an accident! After I had printed three pictures I dropped the plates on the floor and they happened to break, so I pounded them into small pieces. But you see I have pictures for Mr. Halliwell, Mr. Grayson and Mr. Merrill—one apiece—and that was all they ordered. So it isn't so bad that the plate was broken. The order has been filled."

Connery's expressions during this sweet-natured stabbing were most entertaining.

"Let me show the officer a photograph," said Grayson. "Officer, these men, whose names I took,

watched our little party through the windows over there and then took this picture of us."

The officer took a long look.

"Well it seems to have been quite a pleasant little party," he finally announced judicially.

"Officer, you're married? I thought so. Suppose you were entertaining a party of friends at your home and your dear wife was sitting on your knee and some Peeping Tom sneaked up and peeked through the window and tried to take a picture of you because he thought, and wanted to tell your enemies, that it was some woman who was not your wife who was sitting on your knee. What would you do to such a man?"

"I think I'd shoot the—begging your ladies' pardon—I meant to say I think I'd shoot him! May I ask if this lady is your wife, Mr. Grayson?"

"You guessed right the very first time, officer, which is more than this whole flock of detectives could do in several hours."

"'Tis a very handsome wife you have," commented the officer, gallantly; "and may I ask if the other lady, sitting in the other gentleman's lap, is his wife also?"

"Oh, no," answered Grayson. "That is Mr. Eugene Halliwell, hiding behind the beard, and the lady sitting in his lap has been sitting there off and on, so to speak, for more than twenty years. She is his sister, Miss Grace Halliwell."

"It seems to have been quite a respectable party," remarked the policeman, with a faint sigh. Then he

turned on our unbidden guests. "And how dare you men butt in on a gathering of ladies and gentlemen enjoying themselves peaceably and in a proper law-abiding way? I ought to run you in, every one of you."

The party broke up very rapidly after our blue-coated friend had sized up the situation. The last scene was played without the intruding chorus. A cold bottle was brought in and eight glasses filled, in order that we might drink a farewell toast to (and with) "an officer and a gentleman."

CHAPTER XV

A Radical Re-born

IT seems, as I look back upon the Sunday morning following the evening at Mama Rabou's, that I can trace in my "cold-gray-dawn" reflections the revival of that earlier spirit of revolt which recent years of money making and home making had stifled. I awoke rather late to a dismal cloudy sky and to a dull, cloudy mind. The after effects of too much wine, tobacco and excitement were potent but not all bad. One of the errors of the total abstainer is the assumption that the pains of absorbing too much alcohol are entirely unprofitable. In truth a diseased body may mean a stimulated mind. Suffering is more likely to make one think hard, than pleasure. I have no desire to treasure the semi-intoxicated wit which has passed over my ears on a hundred spongy occasions but I should hate to lose out of my philosophy the thoughts of a hundred mornings after.

Having been told often that I am a negative character, I may assume that it takes a blow to make me fight life. Without punishment I am inclined to drift along the course of least resistance until resentment of opposition rouses me to make an attack.

Thus on this Sunday morning a growling headache put a bitterness into the feeling against the railroads which welled up within me as I realized to the full the brutal, unscrupulous character of their methods of fighting a lawsuit.

Of course, it would be easy to say that if I lived a clean life I need fear nothing from such tactics. But it would not be true. I have seen too much of the use of detectives in industrial warfare between employers and employees to think that virtuous living would have thwarted the plotters. The agency had been hired, not to find out whether I was a good man, but to get evidence to show that I was a bad man. If I had not produced the evidence, the sleuths would not have hesitated to do so. It is really surer to "frame up" evidence against any fairly decent man than to get usable evidence of actual wrong-doing. When the trap is laid in advance a far better case can be made out than if the trappers must follow a long devious trail with little preparation for taking advantage of a misstep by the hunted man.

That was the reason why Halliwell, Grayson and I were so anxious to provide our own trap. We wanted to catch our foes in a blackmail failure so as to discredit any possible attack which might come thereafter. [A later note by R. M.: "For the benefit of any unsophisticated person let me remark that the use of despicable methods of this character in fighting public officials is not the exception but the commonplace in public life. My experience has been duplicated in differing forms by most public servants.

of independent power with whom I have ever talked intimately—and I have talked with many, from President down to policeman.]

With my rising wrath against the railroad men surged up another anger—one not so well justified and as yet poorly defined—an anger against the pharisaical attitude of the newspaper-reading public which would have turned thumbs down on me if I had been caught in a "woman affair." . . . I fancied myself defending Mrs. Conway from the leering curiosity of the mob. Out of my imaginary heroics came a warm glow of pleasure. What happy pain it would be to bare my breast to the arrows shot at her! The thought of the unhappiness of her assumed position did not disturb this musing for some time! Then I spent another hour dreaming around Irma. I did not deliberately fix my thoughts upon her, but let them drift in her vicinity; after which I decided that I ought to write to Mary and tell her all about the dinner. This I did.

Duty performed, I went back to contemplation of politics and Irma. The combination may seem strange but the association is reasonable. There is a natural desire in the male to strut before the female of his adoration. Whether in business, society or politics the phenomenon is constant. Individual vanity, reinforced by the sex motive, is a perennial breeder of ambition. My most successful strutting had been political, with Jeannette and Mary as conspicuous figures in the assumed audience. But Jeannette had married and so had Mary! I had

undertaken heavy burdens and had lost interest in the drama for a while. Now Irma Conway had become at least a potential audience. My thought flickered back and forth between Illinois and Washington.

A few days before, I had received a letter from Chuck Dunham, my college-mate who now lived in Springfield. It was written in his persistent vein of pessimism.

"Glad to see you are getting so much publicity in your railroad fight," it ran. "Don't suppose anything can be accomplished of permanent value. Whole system of private ownership is wrong but public ownership with control in these political hams would be worse. Speaking of politics I heard your name mentioned recently as a possible candidate for Governor—also another rumor that you were going to run for Congress. Don't know which place you would fill worse, but I haven't heard of anyone who would do less harm as Governor, so if you want a little boom launched just give me a tip and I'll blow up a red, white and blue balloon for you."

Of course, "Governor" appealed to me far more than "Congressman." Yet—I might be elected to Congress! I had no chance to be Governor. That I knew. Also if I came to Congress there would be the Washington audience — including Irma! Then came a prick of conscience—or regret? There was Mary. Was I forgetting her, belittling her in my mind through a sudden infatuation? Another reaction followed. Just because I was married, did that mean that no other woman except my wife

should be allowed to influence my life? How absurd! A married man and woman can't deny the power of a world of other men and women to affect their individual acts and their married existence. I knew all too well that Mary's ideas of what I was and what I was not were shaped largely by her likings for other men. Just where I should draw the line in letting my thoughts run to and with Irma I did not know. But I knew they would run. That was a fact. My only duty was not to let them run too far.

During the succeeding ten weeks I spent most of my time in Washington and I saw a great deal of Irma—far more than I confessed in my letters home. We became very friendly, but never a caress passed between us, unless the unconcealed affection in my eyes might be so regarded. We talked quite frankly about our ideas of each other—or at least we pretended to do so. Of course, I lied when I emphasized exclusively the mental delight I found in association with her, and impliedly denied the violent pulsing of my veins whenever I even anticipated being in her presence. I hoped she lied to me when she said:

"You're such a comfort to me, Rodney. Really you are the first man who ever showed any interest in me without making love to me. Please don't lose that charm!"

"Do you ever seen any danger signs?" I suggested.

"Not exactly danger signs," she bantered. "No signs of an irrepressible urge to be foolish. But sometimes there are hints as though perhaps you

thought it discourteous to me to seem indifferent to what Gene calls my 'venerable charms.' "

"I shouldn't mind that form of discourtesy," I replied abruptly. "I have always been discourteous that way to women I didn't care for. But I'm not indifferent!"

There was a considerable pause, while I shook inwardly, feeling like a small boy who has defied his teacher. She looked at me steadily from half-closed eyes, the shadow of a smile coming to the corners of her mouth. Finally, I flung up my hands.

"I surrender!" I called out. "I'll never do it again. But that wasn't lovemaking. I just said I wasn't indifferent—and I'm not. I won't pretend I am. I couldn't be self-respecting and indifferent. I'd know there was something wrong with me if I couldn't take pleasure in looking at you."

She pointed her finger at me as though aiming a gun.

"Keep your hands up," she commanded, suddenly rising. Naturally I also stood up. She walked slowly towards me, approaching by small steps until she stood directly before me with her face so near that I could feel the light breath from her parted lips. She put both hands momentarily on my shoulders and lifted herself on tiptoes, looking deep into my eyes for a few maddening seconds while I strove with myself to keep my hands above my head despite an onrushing desire to seize her in my arms.

Then she stepped back quickly and clapped her hands.

"Spell's broken," she announced, walking toward the door. "You're as safe as a church—on fire!"

Before I could say a word she ran out, returning in a few minutes with Miss Stevenson—and from that time until some others arrived, who had been invited to play cards, I, who had come early intentionally, had not another word with her alone. Somehow—I may be wrong—I felt that she would have been more flattered, even if not otherwise pleased, if I had not been so docile. One of my many weaknesses as a lady's man is my readiness to assume that a woman wants what she apparently indicates. Since it is a feminine characteristic to accomplish purposes by indirect methods if possible, I err continually by doing what I am asked to do instead of stopping to figure out what is really desired.

. . . . .

When the hearings before the Commission reached the final week, I asked Mary to join me in Washington, with the plan of taking a brief vacation in the South before returning to Chicago. The result was that Mary and I and Gene and Irma did quite a little pleasuring in and around Washington for a few days after the close of the work before the Commission. The effect of Mary and Irma upon each other was quite entertaining, though often a bit uncomfortable. Of course, Mary had a very clear conception of my interest in Irma and it seemed

by way of contrast that she adopted an extra conservatism in speech and action. On the other hand, Irma became far more unconventional than at any time before Mary's arrival.

Under Irma's stimulation Gene's normal recklessness of talk became more pronounced, and it appeared to me that Irma took a malicious pleasure in encouraging conversations which really shocked Mary's sense of propriety and good taste. Despite my quite honest harmony with Mary's feelings she constantly accused me of having my judgment corrupted by previous association with them. My assurances that Irma was deliberately exceeding her own usual limitations for the purpose of shocking Mary, met incredulous smiles.

"You must have been having quite a gay time with your dark-eyed siren," said Mary late one evening when we had returned to our room.

"Oh, it's exasperating!" I retorted. "You two women are both being as unreal as possible. I never had any such talks with Irma as occur in this present foursome. In fact, she has always stopped Gene very abruptly when his fool tongue began wagging loosely. And you, who have always held your own in any gay company, pour oil on the fire by acting like a Sunday school teacher distributing tracts to chorus girls. You simply incite Gene and Irma to shock you all the more."

"I'm older than I used to be," she answered. "Just as you are, only you seem to forget it."

"Well, we're going south day after to-morrow,"

I said, restraining myself from further debate. "So after to-morrow night you won't have to suffer any longer."

An hour later I was lying awake, cursing my weakness in taking coffee with our late supper, when an arm came out of the darkness and drew my head over to a warm face on which I felt traces of tears.

"You're not really in love with that woman, are you, Rodney?" she said.

"No, I'm not," I answered, not wishing to start any discussion as to just what she meant by the word "love." "I like her very much in certain ways, but, if this answers your question, I haven't the faintest desire to be married to her. I don't want to be married to anyone but you. That is absolutely honest and if you would only believe it, it would save a lot of unhappiness."

"I do believe it," she whispered, "but I'm not sure that is everything. You don't feel the same way toward me as you use to. Of course, you can't help it, but you use to take so much interest in little things that now you take for granted. You use to do little things, like bringing home flowers and massaging my neck when my head was tired. It's the little things that count with women, Rodney. They mean so much. I'm not really jealous of Mrs. Conway. I'm just jealous of your thought and interest. I thought it would be all for me and now I'm not interesting to you. You wander away. Maybe Mrs. Conway attracts you to-day, maybe someone else will to-morrow. But what hurts me is that it isn't

I—that I'm not first. I'm just someone around, whom you like a little."

"No, a great deal," I interrupted.

"Perhaps even a great deal—but not very intensely. When I think that you'll never care for me again the way you used to care, it makes me very blue!"

I protested as best I could. Of course, her feeling was half true, half false. The wild thrill of opening romance would not come again and could not come again, any more than one could wish back the red dawn, in the middle of the day. We had passed that time. As the sculptor has graven it, Time stands still. We pass on. We cannot hurry our steps and catch up with our youth. It is behind us and we have no power to go back. Mary and I must go on to new thrills and different joys—perhaps higher but less rich inspirations and more placid pleasures. I tried to make this viewpoint cheerful to the doubting Mary, but still doubting she fell asleep.

My mind kept on along the same path. Yes, we must go on to new thrills. I realized that the fever in my veins at thought of Irma was not the old thrill such as I had felt for Mary or for Jeannette. For one thing it had a flavor of wrong in it, which, philosophically, I would deny but which, emotionally, persisted. It was not that I thought it wrong to care for any woman except my wife. Nothing seems to me more stupid than the theory that in a world of millions each man and woman finds in the hazard

of marriage the best possible companion on earth, the one to whom he has the most to give and who has the most to give to him. But unless a marriage prove utterly impossible it does seem reasonable to believe that a man and woman can get more out of one long intensive comradeship than out of many transient associations.

Thus a married man and woman need to be on guard against endangering their one great research with other futile experiments. It is this guarding sense that gives a true flavor of wrong to my strong interest in Irma. My attitude may seem wicked and sinful to orthodox moralists but I shall try to express it candidly. If I thought that Mary and I were a partnership failure and hence that there must be sometime a new mating, or else that the possible growth of our lives would be stunted, and if I thought also that Irma and I might be a partnership success, it seemed as though my desire for her might lose entirely the flavor of wrong. But the fact was that Mary and I seemed to me a fairly good team —and apparently Mary thought so too. The fact was that I would regard marriage with Irma as a distinctly hazardous experiment. I would be tempted to risk the experiment, if she were equally adventurous, and if I were free. But, not being free, I regarded Mary as a very fortunate check on any such reckless venture.

There was a wild strain in Irma that was fascinating in a playmate but probably would be most discomforting in a wife. My hand moved gently across

Mary's shoulder. She was such a comfortable companion. Really I was very fond of her. Our life together was peaceful and soothing. I had enough big game hunting to do in earning a living. To fight business tigers was exciting work, but to attempt to domesticate a tigress might be a most uncertain pleasure. . . . About this time I fell asleep.

. . . . .

Mary and I, Pillar Grayson and his wife, Gene Halliwell and Irma were dining together the next evening at our hotel when a bell-boy laid a telegram before me. It was a long message signed with twenty-five names, some personally well-known to me, others recognized only by reputation. They were a committee of organization representing an insurgent Republican movement that was spreading across the country and had recently stirred up Illinois politics considerably. I was informed in the usual broad language of political announcements that the progressive Republicans of Illinois desired me to act as standard-bearer in the forthcoming fight and be their candidate for the Republican nomination for Governor.

I passed the message over to Grayson.

"You see I'm still stealing your laurels," I remarked. "This is really your fight that we've been making, but I am getting all the glory."

He read it carefully and responded with his usual generosity and optimism.

"That's splendid," he answered. "You've been doing a great job and here's a chance for a bigger one."

"There isn't even a fighting chance to win," I remarked.

"Maybe not," he said. "Of course, you can't be sure, but I should say probably not. But think of the chance to stir things up, to educate the people to understand what is being done to them."

"Educational campaigns cost money," I suggested. "Just good intentions and a loud voice won't do. It would take a fortune to make a real campaign."

"One hundred thousand?"

"Nearer two hundred thousand, I think, to make a real impression."

"Look at that list of names." He retrieved the telegram from Irma who was reading it with shining eyes. "There's McCanlif and Watterson and Peasley. They could put up the whole amount and never miss it."

"Yes, but would they? You know how it always goes. Wealthy men don't like to throw their money away. They might contribute Ten Thousand apiece. Then they would watch and see how things were going. The old politicians and their pals would tell them we hadn't a chance; and they would shut up their purses. Of course, if they thought we could win—they'd give us all the money we needed. But they won't plunge heavily on losers."

"I don't understand all this money talk," broke in Irma impatiently. "You don't buy votes, do you?"

"No," I answered slowly, "you don't buy votes exactly but you can't even get your story to the voters without money. Just think what halls and bands and bill-boards and printing and letters cost, when you are trying to reach a million voters. To talk to one-tenth of them means a very expensive speaking and advertising campaign. Just figure the cost of one letter to a million men: Suppose it's one cent for printing and another cent for getting lists, addressing, mailing and so forth, and a two-cent stamp on the envelope. That's four cents apiece, or Forty Thousand Dollars. Then take newspaper advertising. You could use Fifty Thousand Dollars over the State of Illinois and half the voters wouldn't even learn that you were running. You need money first, last and all the time in a political campaign. Without it your effort is a waste of energy."

"I don't see how you can even consider it," said Mary plaintively. "You have to spend all you make as it is, Rodney, and a campaign would stop your work, wouldn't it?"

"Of course I can't afford it," I answered promptly. "In fact, I'm not seriously considering it, for that reason."

"Oh, woof! woof!" interrupted Irma, with the light of battle in her eyes. "If a man never risks anything he never wins anything. You wouldn't go broke in one campaign, Rodney. Think of all the money that the papers have said you are making out of this railroad case! You showed me one article where it said you were taking a fortune from

the people, and asked what they were going to get back. Now here's the answer. The price is cheap for one good Governor!"

I laughed and shook my head at her.

"You know perfectly well, young lady, that I didn't get that money, because I bored you for half an hour one evening telling you about the enormous bills for engineers and accountants and statisticians and other expenses which were included in that, 'One Hundred Thousand Dollars Paid to Rodney Merrill'—which the newspapers headlined."

"I'm just joking, you know," she replied, "and Mrs. Merrill must excuse me for even discussing your personal affairs. Of course you know what you can afford to do, and I don't; but it does seem to me to be such a splendid opportunity. Even from the money point of view I should think it would give you a bigger standing as a lawyer to be a candidate for Governor. It just thrills me to talk of it."

"Running for office isn't as good a professional advertisement as you think. It might do some good. It would be sure to do some harm. Worst of all it would discredit my railroad work. The railroad people would say that my fight on them was just political—that I had been attacking them as a means of boosting myself into office."

The six of us argued the matter over through the remainder of dinner. Then we went to the theater. Between the acts Irma on one side and Aileen Grayson on the other urged me to go into the fight.

Every now and then I intercepted a pathetic look from Mary who was feebly opposing Pillar and Gene in their efforts to break down her opposition. Poor Mary! Just as we were getting on sound financial ground, where there would be more ease for her and more of the little luxuries so dear to her heart, she saw my friends persuading me to turn back into the morass of debt. Furthermore, Mary dreaded publicity. She shuddered when the newspapers attacked me. Even when I was praised she shrank from the headlines and felt apologetic in the presence of joking friends who rallied me no my success as a self-advertiser.

When the evening was over and we had returned to our room she prepared herself for bed in an ominous silence.

"You needn't look so tragic," I said finally. "I don't think I'll do it. I'm just taking time to think it all over."

"You'll do it," she answered. "They all want you to, and their opinions count for more than mine."

"My dear, there isn't anyone whose opinion is half so important to me as yours. In whatever I do you must be a fellow-sufferer or a fellow-enjoyer. I haven't any right to disregard your opinion and I don't intend to do so. If you say 'no,' after thinking it over and talking it over carefully, I'll tell you right now that I won't do it. My own opinion is so uncertain that I could not feel sure that you were wrong. And so I could not possibly say 'yes.' If

I were positive as to what I ought to do I might feel it necessary to oppose even you. But I'm not sure and I can't be. So in the end you are going to decide this question, old lady. You had better accept the responsibility. It may weigh heavily upon you if you decide against our best interest."

We talked interminably—mostly ineffectively, in speculations that arrived nowhere—until finally somehow we fell asleep. When I awoke in the morning she was already half-dressed, sitting before her dressing table and trying with great care some new method of doing up her hair. Her eyelids seemed a trifle red but she smiled cheerily as she saw that I was awake. Then she danced over and posed herself most charmingly at the foot of the bed. In her delicate lingerie, decorated with little bow knots of pink ribbon, with her pretty silk-clad legs half curled under her and half-revealed, her reddish brown hair artfully disarranged and her blue eyes radiantly kind, she made an enticing picture.

"How is the Governor this morning?" she inquired with a dainty affectation of solemnity.

"He isn't going to be Governor at all," I retorted, lifting myself to a sitting position. "He has decided that he would rather be Mary's good boy than anything else."

I put my arms around her and rumpled that new coiffure recklessly.

"He shall be Mary's good boy," she announced, disengaging herself for a moment and sitting up very

straight. "And also he shall be Governor. Mary wants her good boy to be Governor."

Thus the great decision was made, although I put it in somewhat different language in my reply to the telegram from the eminent committee of insurgents.

CHAPTER XVI

"Spend and Be Spent"

MY campaign is ended. My vote was even smaller than the pessimists expected. What has been accomplished seems on the surface to be trivial. Yet I have a feeling that great changes are impending and perhaps we have builded better than we knew. It would be tiresome to detail the exhausting weeks during which I traveled up and down the State of Illinois talking, shaking hands, sitting in smoky conferences, sometimes discussing strategies and principles—but always carrying the burden of money problems. I had pictured a candidate as a man preparing speeches and statements and debating policies. I found that one of a candidate's main duties is to assist in money raising; and another is to settle disputes as to how money shall be spent.

If Mr. Jones shows an inclination to give Five Hundred Dollars he must be hurried in for a final hypnosis by the candidate. If Jack and Jim are in a row over their appropriate shares of funds, considering the strength of their organizations and the voting power of their districts, and the manager cannot harmonize them—let the candidate decide! Of

course, theoretically a candidate should have nothing to do with these matters; but in a raw political group such as usually controls insurgent movements the candidate is called on to do all the things he shouldn't do as well as all the things he should.

Another excitement of campaigning was supplied by our exceptionally inefficient speakers' bureau, through which all public meetings were arranged. For example, an enthusiast from Bloomington promised a huge meeting, whereupon without checking up on his promises the largest hall available was engaged, a brass band provided and an "automobile parade" arranged. The meeting was set for a Saturday night when every possible counter-attraction competed for attendance—including a fraternal convention with a parade of its own. Our meeting was atrociously under-advertised. Bloomington was a difficult town for us anyhow because all important local politicians were solidly against us.

The result of this blundering was a "parade" which consisted of three automobiles and a brass band followed by a crowd of jeering boys. The local police kindly forced us to detour around the principal street which was reserved for the fraternal parade. So we "paraded" up a quiet side street to a large hall where a reception committee of seven glowered from the platform at a vindictive audience of possibly fifty "fellow-citizens." Of course we would have polled more votes in Bloomington if we had had no meeting, because we must have lost heavily by this fiasco.

At times there were pleasant surprises, meetings that were a success despite all possible faults of management. This was what occurred in Springfield. The story is worth telling because the meeting, while a spectacular success from the public point of view, was even more important to me as a personal experience which is likely to have some lasting consequences.

The afternoon before the evening engagement in Springfield I spent in a dismal automobile tour through nearby towns. We would drive into a small village in our open car. Our cornetist would arise and play "Baby Mine" or some equally appropriate and inspiring tune, whereby we expected to gather a crowd. I had tried in vain to persuade this musician to attempt some gay or martial music. But he was an old campaigner and could not or would not change his technique. "Silver Threads Among the Gold" and "Massa's in the Cold, Cold, Ground" were his specialties and no upstart candidate could tell him what to play! Once on my insistence for military tunes he did consent to render "Just Before the Battle, Mother." After that I was glad to accept "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

Following the cornet selection our introducer, whose sole qualification was a voice like a fire gong, would inform the assembled multitude of Main Street idlers that "the next Governor of Illinois" would address them. Then I would torture my weary and inflamed vocal cords for ten or fifteen minutes for the benefit of a small, shifting group of

dull-eyed men whose interest in "the next Governor" was obviously quite casual. Another member of the party would mingle with the crowd, passing out pamphlets which we hoped might lengthen the campaign discussion for a time after our departure. At the finish of my speech there would be usually a feeble burst of applause, artificially stimulated by the cornetist, who always waved a small flag vigorously. Under cover of this enthusiasm I would insist on shaking hands with a few reluctant auditors who had come too near the car to escape my grasp. Then the driver would toot the horn and drive rapidly away while I stood bowing and waving my hat to imaginary cheers from the populace.

It can be imagined that several hours of this sort of thing during the afternoon—following upon many previous days of similar entertainment—left me somewhat frayed when we arrived in Springfield in time for dinner. At the hotel I found a letter from Mary which I laid open before me on the dressing table to read while undressing for a much-desired bath.

It was a plaintive message, full of household troubles and personal worries—

"Manson has telephoned twice about his account. . . . I know it seems like a lot of money for one month but I had to have so many things just at this time. I didn't realize how large the bill was getting. . . . I told him you would be back next week, but if I could get a letter to you you might send a check sooner. . . . Father is not at all well. It worries me so to think he has so little strength. He was

always so strong and robust looking. . . . I'm going to dinner at the Fannings on Thursday. I'm almost ashamed to go. I've nothing to wear but that delft blue that I've worn to their house so often. . . . Another thing, I dread to meet people. All our old friends make so much fun of the insurgents. The *Tribune* had an editorial yesterday which was very clever but very nasty about your 'Vote for Yourselves' speech. . . . I don't think it was fair to you at all but it made me so embarrassed because the editorial was funny and everywhere I went yesterday I felt as though someone was laughing at me. . . . Oh, I do wish you hadn't gone into this campaign. . . . Of course I hope the meetings are better now. . . . Are you making a new speech at Springfield? I think the 'Crusader' speech is better than the 'Vote for Yourselves,' don't you? Will you really be home next Friday? Mr. Brown told me over the 'phone yesterday that they needed you very much at headquarters. Money is low, I believe. Oh, there's never enough money anywhere, is there? Best wishes for success at Springfield. . . ."

It was fortunate that I read the letter before bathing because I needed the relaxation of the hot water and the stimulation of the cold to get my spirits back to normal. Mary didn't realize how dreadfully her letters hurt me. She wrote just as she would talk if I were home, without art or conscious purpose. It simply never occurred to her to help me with my campaigning. Possibly if someone had suggested to her that campaigning was very hard work at best and that, under the conditions I had, it was very depressing, she might have tried deliberately to write cheery, inspiring letters. But I know that if I had suggested this, she would have asked me if I wanted her to be insincere with me.

Mary is not unkind or deliberately selfish. She is simply thoughtless. She doesn't imagine situations remote from herself. If she had actually seen me stagger into the Springfield hotel, dusty, dog-tired, with a feverish throat and half sick from poor food and irregular hours of sleeping and eating, she would have felt sorry and possibly might have concealed her lesser troubles from me. Certainly if her imagination had read my state of mind she would not have criticised my speech, which I had made so many scores of times—with slight variations—that it simply nauseated me now every time I had to start on the too-familiar phrases.

How I hated that speech! When I first wrote it I thought it quite good. Even old political writers had said it was "good stuff." I had never delivered it to a fair-sized audience of reasonably friendly disposition without getting a real response. But oh, how I had come to hate it! And now Mary cast cold water on it because some editorial writer had been funny about it!

I was dressing gloomily when Chuck Dunham knocked on the door.

"Greatness in its BVDs," he remarked as I let him in. "How's the voice?"

"Doing pretty well," I said hoarsely. "After about five minutes of warming up they'll hear me all right. What am I in for—a frost?"

"I think not," he answered, grinning wisely. "Fact is that I pulled a little stunt off here that may produce quite a crowd. See here!"

He opened a newspaper he was carrying and I read with some amazement

Merrill to Expose Railroad Lobby
Who Put through Bill 776?
The Little Brown Bag with Fifty Thousand Dollars

"What the devil is this?" I asked.

"I have the whole story here," he explained, producing a manuscript. "One of my newspaper friends unearthed it and came to me to supply some of the details. When he found where the trail led he didn't dare to spring it himself and agreed to let me give it to you. This afternoon's story only hints at the facts, but, believe me, if I know Springfield at all it will bring a mob to the hall to-night."

Bill 776 is now historic so I'll only summarize the exposure that Dunham presented to me. It seems that a blunder had been made in a large issue of railroad bonds and an act of the legislature was necessary to cure the flaw. So the railroad lawyers had prepared an innocent-looking bill, apparently just a harmless technical amendment to the railroad laws. They had arranged with their friends to slip it through both houses and it had passed the Senate and had reached the final stage in the House before any but a few insiders knew what was happening. At the last moment, however, a group of pirates in the House had scented an odor of graft and held up Bill 776 until they could find out what was in it for them.

Thereupon the railroad lobbyists had sent a call for help and a special agent had hurried down from Chicago with a large amount of money to be used for immediately necessary cash payments. Mysterious conferences had been held throughout one evening between legislators of questionable reputation and the man who had suddenly arrived with the "little brown bag." The next day Bill 776 passed the House. After weeks of patient delving one suspicious newspaper man had put all the necessary facts together and had all the proof necessary to convince the public of what had been done—although, as was afterwards shown, not enough proof to convict anyone of a crime.

Dunham had taken some chance in announcing that I would tell this story. But I guess he knew me well enough to be sure that with the ample evidence he gave me I would carry out my part.

He was right about the crowd. The hall was packed—the biggest crowd of our downstate campaign. I used my regular speech as an opening, but in the middle of it I said that I had a special message to deliver that night to the people of Illinois, a message that it seemed appropriate to announce in Springfield where the legislature made laws for the people—laws presumably for all the people—but laws which were very often only intended to benefit a part of the people. Then I told the story of Bill 776 to a crowd so dramatically silent that the strained attention gradually stimulated my own tired nerves to a new enthusiasm. When I finished this

revelation, I had the curiously exultant feeling that comes to anyone accustomed to audiences when he knows that he has his crowd with him. The facts were so overwhelming that no enemy would have dared even a disapproving gesture.

I laid down the papers from which I had been quoting and, leaving the speaker's table, walked to the edge of the platform.

"I've made my speech," I said. "I've told you who is running the State of Illinois. I've given you some new proofs. Now I'm going to talk with you, man to man, and ask you what we are going to do about it. I'm going to tell you what I want to do and I'm going to ask you if you will help me."

As I leaned out above the footlights, looking over the crowd, my eyes found the eyes of a woman who was sitting half-way down the hall just off the center aisle. She was leaning forward, her face partly hidden by the head of the man in front of her. As our eyes met I knew her—for one staggering moment. Then the delusion passed. It couldn't be. And yet—I shook myself free. My long pause had only intensified the dramatic feeling between me and my listeners.

"Man to man," I began slowly, "let us ask: What are we going to do about it?" Then I made my "lost speech," so called because I had never made it before and there was no stenographer to take it down. I must have talked nearly an hour more. I'm sure that not a person left the hall. For a time there was no applause. Then the tension lifted

enough so that there came brief handclaps—then longer salvos with scattering shouts. At last I stopped. I had no calculated ending but I remember saying: "I didn't enter this fight expecting that this first revolt against the old order would win. We are talking man to man: I wouldn't try to deceive you any more than I would try to deceive myself. I came into this fight to strike a blow for the things in which I believe, for the things in which you believe.

"To-night you and I know that we have a common cause. To-morrow I shall bear away from here not my message but our message, not my faith but our faith. I am only a torch-bearer, carrying the flame of American ideals from one community to another, seeking to kindle anew in hearts that have been chilled by the selfishness and greed of false public servants, the fire of faith in the honesty and justice of democratic government. And in that faith we shall struggle on through the night—though the night may be long—and we shall fight as men have had to fight throughout the ages against the powers of darkness—until at last victory 'cometh in the morning.'"

For a moment I stood silent, feeling utterly spent, and then the storm broke. Never did I hear richer music than the roar of that crowd. Think of the feelings of a man who had shouted in village after village to slim, unresponsive street gatherings, feeling like a quack medicine vendor, and wondering inwardly if perhaps he were a faker, who had come

at the end of weary days into a city notorious for its justifiable cynicism as to all public men, the state capital, the scene of uncounted betrayals of public trust, who had related an almost incredible story of wrong to an audience wherein sat many of the wrong-doers themselves, who had thrown aside his safe, prepared speech and risked the inspiration of the moment—and then at the end had carried his hearers beyond even his own enthusiasm! It came to me suddenly that I had saved myself as well as my cause, that the doubters in Chicago, who had been quietly laying the failures of the campaign upon my weakness as a candidate, would be completely routed. In the face of this triumph it would be hard to continue to say, as some had been whispering, that the candidate "made no popular appeal."

The next ten minutes was a swirl of faces. I felt men slapping me on the back. I shook several hands at once. I repeated the inane, "thank you" a hundred times. Several women embarrassed me with actual embraces. Then suddenly I met that woman's eyes again. In my semi-intoxication it seemed that I saw only the eyes until I heard a voice that lifted me above even the clouds wherein I was floating:

"Oh, Rodney, Rodney, that was wonderful!" she said.

Yes, her arms were actually around me. Yet I could not believe. I felt giddy, with the long nervous strain and this super-exaltation at the end.

"It can't be Irma!" I stammered.

Then I saw Gene Halliwell's thin bearded face over her shoulder and heard him say:

"A nice little surprise party you gave us! We expected to surprise you, but you pulled the real surprise. We expected to be bored to death and we've been going through emotional agonies for an hour. Irma cried for five minutes when you were talking about, 'Abraham Lincoln and our tears, Illinois!' "

"Did I do that?" I asked in bewilderment.

"No you didn't," said Irma. "But you did make people cry once. I wasn't the only one."

More people pressed around, but as soon as I could get free I went over to Irma and Gene.

"I'm sane again now," I said. "Tell me how on earth you people happen to be here."

"We arrived last Monday for a house party," explained Irma. "I was visiting Grace in St. Louis and Gene has been home for a week making life miserable for us. We had talked of going to hear you when you went into southern Illinois. Then this Springfield invitation came—we are staying with the Kendricks—and we thought we wouldn't let you know we were here. We brought the whole party over to-night."

"Just made them come for fear you wouldn't have a crowd," said Gene. "Say, boy, if you are gathering 'em in this way at every stop I'd say you're elected."

"No chance," I answered quickly. "This is the

first good meeting I've had in ten days and Chuck Dunham made this meeting. I want you to meet him."

I wig-wagged to Chuck, who was chating with some lingering members of the local committee. He sauntered over and was introduced. Then we all went back to the house party guests who were waiting in the rear of the hall. Mr. and Mrs. Kendricks insisted that I come out to the house with them for a late supper.

"I don't think my campaign manager will let me," I replied reluctantly. "Probably I have a 5:45 train to take in the morning, and very likely some sad delegation is waiting at the hotel to tell me of its woes."

"Your campaign manager has gone crazy," said Dunham. "He has discovered that he has a real candidate. He grabbed all your notes and went off with the newspaper men to be sure they get the story straight on the wires. He asked me to see that you got back to the hotel all right. Nothing doing until a train at 10:45 to-morrow morning, he said."

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" I cried. "I feel like a boy out of school. If the presence of a cheerful imbecile won't disturb the house party I'll be very glad to join you, Mr. Kendricks. I warn you, however, that I feel a bit light-headed after such an evening."

A couple of hours later I managed to have a little talk with Irma in the ingle-nook in the billiard room, while all the rest of the party were engaged elsewhere in dancing or card playing.

"The reaction is coming upon me, now," I remarked. "I have a vague recollection of some strong emotionalism in that speech of mine. I imagine that I struck a religious note. I hope it didn't ring false."

"Not at all, not at all," she asserted. "I don't know how it would read, but you were so deadly in earnest, Rodney, that what you said sounded wonderful. It was like some prophet of old thundering on the mountain."

"I'm not a very aged prophet," I laughed.

"You didn't look young. Really you looked inspired. I was quite carried off my feet."

"I'm so glad you were there."

"I wouldn't have missed it for anything in the world. I thought I knew you but now I see that I did not."

"Maybe I was unreal to-night."

"No, you were very real. I think that was your true self speaking. Rodney, you are very self-conscious ordinarily, aren't you?"

"Yes, I guess I am."

"You don't express yourself as you are. You cover up. To-night you were—well—almost naked I should say. You needn't be ashamed to expose your soul. The revelation will bring people to you, because you really want to do good."

"I'm glad you think so. I think so sometimes, in secret. But there is so much cant and hypocrisy that I dread misunderstanding."

"I believe that is your great weakness. Pardon

me for being brutally frank. You dread misunderstanding and you insure it by pretending to be what you aren't. You pretend to be a cynical man of the world. You're a fanatic idealist—and a boy at heart."

"With all a boy's illusions," I suggested.

"What of it? Without illusions how would the world go forward? Isn't the illusion of to-day the reality of to-morrow? You said that to me once. Do you recant?"

"No, I don't recant. Irma, I want to tell you something. This meeting gave me a new lease of hope to-night. Not a hope to win. I can't win. It is probably better that I shouldn't. I'm only fighting to prepare the way for others who may win to-morrow. But you have done something more than the meeting. You have given me a renewed faith in life. Let me try to explain——"

"Tell me," she whispered. Her eyes were welcoming. She was very beautiful. I glowed with the nearness of her loveliness. Again I felt that impulse to kneel before her, to tell her that she was a goddess and I her devout worshiper. I wanted to touch her, not to caress, but merely to touch her as though the touch would heal every trouble of my spirit and put my soul at peace. Then she put her hand on mine and said again: "Tell me."

I told her in a rush of words not well chosen but intense. I told her that I had begun to lose faith in happiness—in my power to give happiness. No one seemed happy and yet I worked hard with the

hope of making someone happy. Everywhere I found discontent and pain and unsatisfied longing. Suspicion, jealousy and greed peered at me from the eyes of people, from strangers in audiences, from politicians, from friends, from my own family. Yet I didn't believe that I wanted to take from anyone. I wanted to give. It seemed to me that I had been endowed with the power to give things to people. But those to whom I tried to give more than they gave to me were not made happy. They wanted more—or they wanted what I could not give.

Then to-night I had found I could give something to a great hall-full of people—something that stirred them and made them happy for the moment. Then she had come to me with shining eyes and I had felt that I had made her happy—for a moment, at least.

"For a long time," she whispered.

Half unconsciously, but with a delicious sub-conscious pleasure, I had been gripping her hand. Suddenly I bent and kissed it. As I did so she leaned down and her lips rested for one joyous moment on my bowed head.

With that light caress it seemed as though all my doubtings and perplexities, all the infinite vexations of campaigning were lifted from me. A divine sense of reason and purpose unsnarled the tangles of existence. The thought of man serving woman—serving God—came with that strange clearness with which problems are solved in dreams. I can't express the idea more plainly because the moment I

tried to put it into words it fled away. But in the instant of apparent perception I was supremely happy. It was as though I had seen Truth—not a truth—but all that is true—in a flash of inspiration.

. . . . . .

Voices were heard in the hallway. We arose and walked toward the door—not very steadily, but leaning each a little upon the other. Half-way across the room we paused.

What I said may sound stupid, but she understood:

"We'll never be strangers again, will we?"

She shook her head.

I stood trying to get hold of myself, as a man who realizes he is near to intoxication. Then I laughed—not with amusement but rather in self-deprecation.

"Well, that's my naked soul. Do you wonder that I try to keep it clothed?"

She smiled.

"Perhaps you are wiser than I thought," she said.

"But you didn't mind my being foolish for a few moments to-night?"

"I loved it."

. . . . . .

Chuck Dunham came to say that I should have been in my bed an hour before. I agreed with him but I thanked him for having allowed me that hour of grace.

CHAPTER XVII

Gleams

THERE is much more that could be written about that campaign for Governor, but very little which seems to me worth writing. In my reaction after the hard struggle the details all seem trivial and only the broad effects important. Undoubtedly we did stir the state out of a long political lethargy. We had had "good government" for many years—that is, respectable, sleek appearing government whereby those who had wealth and power quietly profited at the expense of those who had not. Imperceptibly the burden laid by the governing class on the governed had increased and unrest had grown. But the dull-minded and overworked had only a sense of wrong. They had lacked any definite hostility to those who were exploiting them.

The stolid, yet somehow wistful, crowds that had passed before my eyes had educated me, even if I had failed to educate them. I had realized that they were not ready for revolt. They were footsore and weary; but most of them had a humble idea that it was ordained that they should be burden carriers for other men and they had no vigorous resentment at either the industrial system or its rulers

who provided them with their burdens. They were inclined to believe that a man who offered them work on the condition of reaping all their profits was conferring a favor on them in paying them enough wages to keep them physically able to go on working for him.

The trade union leaders combated this belief in a crude way, but did not overthrow it. They sowed discontent with the amount of the wage but very few of them had vision enough to educate their followers to an understanding of the stupidities and wrongs which they were asked to accept as wisdom and justice. No political or social revolution of real value could come out of such a blind citizenship. A demagogue might arouse a foolish destructive wrath that would tear down good and bad together. But I had no desire to be such a leader or to achieve such results.

Near the end of the campaign I had received a letter from Jeannette. Her husband was trying to run some mines in Mexico. They were living in the danger zone between various bands of revolutionists. They were being taxed to death by the so-called government, for "protection," which they did not receive. They were being preyed upon by every new "General" who attained a local power backed up by a looting band of brigands. But what was her husband's own work? Jeannette saw things more clearly than he.

"Jim is so exasperated," [she wrote]. "He says he is trying to give these poor stupid people useful work at wages better

than they have ever earned, that he is trying to make the country prosperous, bringing in foreign capital and developing its wonderful resources. Then he is robbed by government and outlaws alike. Neither life nor property is safe. If they force him to abandon his work they will simply destroy their own opportunities.

"In a way what Jim says is true—and yet I wonder if what Jim and his employers want to do is really the right thing. They hire men for wages which you wouldn't think would support a dog. Jim's employers expected to make at least a thousand per cent on their investment. They helped to put in power a government of thieves who would steal concessions from the people and give them to Jim's company.

"Sometimes it seems to me that Jim's friends just came here to rob these people and now they object to being robbed themselves. They say the people are stupid and ungrateful. Maybe this would be a happy land if the people were meek and peaceable and let themselves be worked for starvation wages so that other men could build mansions on Fifth Avenue. But when I read—as I have read—that hosts of workers in the United States earn no more than Five Hundred Dollars a year for long hours of daily hard labor, I'm not surprised that these Mexicans prefer their lawless, poverty-stricken freedom to the law and order slavery that the foreign masters urge them to accept.

"They are very dull and ignorant and lazy and they don't arouse my personal sympathy at all. I think they are probably wrong-headed and would be better off if they accepted 'civilizing,' for a time at least. Yet I can't feel that our educative methods are wholly admirable.

"Your campaign has interested me greatly, not only on account of you, but because it brought home to me down here that this civilization, which the Americans around us talk of bringing into Mexico, is still a very greedy, cruel, dishonest thing, even in the noble state of Illinois."

Jeannette overlooks one thing that appeals to me —the value and persistent effect of our ideals. Our lives are so imperfect that it does seem at times as though our professions of high purposes were hypocrisies, used to give a false sense of security to those from whom we intend to take. Yet the more I see of men in large numbers the more I observe the dominance of a desire to do for others things which will make them respect, love or admire us. Vanity, the wish to be well thought of, may seem a mean motive but it is a powerful force for good. Our yieldings to material, fleshly passions, at the sacrifice of a greater accomplishment, are more often the results of ignorance and short-sightedness than of baseness of character. At least this belief is the foundation of my optimism in humanity's progress. It seems to me that the more we know, the better the things we achieve—as a rule.

Thus, out of this campaign, I have come to a faith in education, in persistent sowing of seeds to help every-day thinking. If I made another campaign I should attack, not the wickedness, but the stupidity of leaders who exploit the people instead of serving them. Think of the wasted ability of a clever man who works hard all his life to dig himself deep into a dishonored grave! What a tragedy for an immortal soul! It isn't posthumous fame of which I am thinking. It is the posthumous judgment of a soul upon its own pitiful achievement in the opportunity of life.

. . . . .

Mary was very comforting after the campaign. She was so glad that it was all over and at the same time so sure that I must be more disappointed than I said, that she showered me with kind attentions. In truth I was not unhappy, but rather I was more relieved than Mary and particularly pleased to feel that she and I were drawn closer together again. Also I was seriously worried over the interest in Irma that persisted in my thought. I could not analyze my feelings but I suffered from them most intensely. I had not seen her since the Springfield meeting. We had exchanged a few short letters, but they were only significant in their omissions and in the fact that we wrote at all.

I wanted to write to Irma and I guessed that she wanted to write to me. But I did not dare to write anything that was real or important, and letter writing otherwise is a futile proceeding. The reason I made my letters to Irma so tasteless was because I knew full well the danger I would run in starting even a harmless intimacy of expression. Just to test myself I sat down one day in an hour's lull during the down-state campaign and wrote a letter "from the heart out"—a letter which I never sent. I am destroying it as I write these words but I am going to quote a few sentences in order to make clear my state of mind:

"I shall not try to explain why I feel this way—for, if I knew, then I should be able to solve the puzzle of life. I should know the 'why' of everything. Long, long ago I learned that the end of all seeking is merely finding what

is—and beyond 'what is' lies shoreless space that we must cross before we shall learn any more.

"What is—is that your presence thrills me and the thought of you in absence lights up my day—that to be near you is like feeling a soft hand closing around the heart, a pain that is danger-sweet. This yearning is made of the same stuff as love of life. It comes with the exaltation of a religious passion to sacrifice oneself for another. It dominates with the ruthlessness of hunger. But it is a hunger, not to take, but to give."

I have quoted this letter because it states a feeling that I do not understand fully, and which I am quite sure no one else would understand at all, unless possibly Irma—and of that I have some doubt. The dull materialist may label it as passion and, if he is conventionally moral, he may call it sinful. The unbalanced æsthete may call it pure love. I know that it is neither pure love nor pure passion. It is too sacrificial and tender a feeling to be given a brutal name. But on the other hand, I know that only ignorance or hypocrisy would insist that it has only spiritual significance. It is the imperfect love of a man for a woman, but sufficiently idealistic so that not for any passing pleasure would I risk soiling or cheapening it, by making an "affair" out of it for gossips to pass around through unclean minds.

This is not an all-absorbing love, because it has no diminishing effect upon my affection for Mary. Possibly it has deepened my fondness for her. At times I wish that I could tear it out of my thoughts so that Mary might have that legal monopoly to which she is supposed to be entitled. But to do this

would leave an open wound that would be long in healing. In romantic moments I think that it would never cease to bleed.

There is another loss that I should suffer in depriving myself of Irma—the constant stimulation of an interest so vivid that life seems always worth while. I find from time to time this same stimulation in Mary but it is not quite steady and keen enough to conquer the depressions to which a tired body and mind sometimes succumb. I am becoming very curious about this effect of a woman upon the god within a man. I say "the god within" because if there be any divine element in human beings surely it is felt in that urge to do things, to make something of life, that illusion even of the pessimist that there is some reason in ambition and some hope in achievement beyond the mere sustaining of life and the increase of physical sensation.

I was discussing this question with Mary one evening, indulging in sweeping generalities with an ingenuous assumption of abstract interest that was pitifully futile to deceive a woman's intuition, when she said:

"Is Mrs. Conway still visiting Miss Halliwell in St. Louis, Rodney?"

"Really I can't say," I answered, aghast at this sudden dragging in of the concealed object of my thoughts. "The last I heard of her she was there."

"The last you heard," she repeated significantly. "Was that recently enough so that I could safely write to her there?"

"I think so." I was seriously embarrassed. "Gene wrote me a few days ago and spoke of her."

"It occurred to me that she might care to run up to Chicago and stay with us for a few days on her way east—or is she going back east?"

"Really, Marykins, I don't know what her plans are. I am no confidant of hers. I didn't even know that she had left Washington until she appeared in Springfield with the Halliwells."

"Oh," she said.

Then there was quite a pause.

"Mary," I began belligerently, "you don't like Mrs. Conway. Why on earth should you ask her to visit us?"

"You like her, don't you?"

"Yes, of course I do. You know that. But that is far from a good reason why you should invite her."

"I thought," she said slowly, choosing her words carefully, "that perhaps the stimulation of her presence might inspire you to great deeds. Perhaps you might be able to win Mrs. Girling's case!"

There was nothing to do but laugh. So I laughed vigorously—and lonesomely.

"Mary, you are the strangest mixture I ever knew. In this suggestion and your wicked thrust at Irma's supposed influence on me, you are just as unlike the dear, sweet girl that you are nine days out of ten, as you possibly could be."

"You find me interesting?" she remarked with a gleam of battle in her eyes.

"Very interesting—and exasperating."

"Stimulating?"

"Irritating, may be the better word."

"Failing again," she said with mock pathos, rising and moving toward the writing desk. "I'll invite the genuine stimulator."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," I asserted.

"Oh, yes I shall," she replied.

And of course, in the end, she did.

CHAPTER XVIII

Groping

THE pleasant nightmare of Irma's visit has passed. I did not believe she would accept the invitation, but I imagine that Mary phrased it very cleverly. She is good at that sort of thing. Irma sensed a concealed challenge which her alert nature could not quite resist. It might have pleased a cheap vanity if I had thought that Irma cared enough for me to be willing to come, even though in violation of her standards of good taste. Unfortunately for vanity I felt quite sure that if Irma really cared about me deeply she would have declined to be our guest. So her acceptance depressed me considerably, despite the pleasure I anticipated in seeing her.

Mary certainly gave Irma a busy week. There was some kind of party every evening, and luncheons and teas scattered liberally through the days. The superficial observer would have thought that "Irma" and "Mary" were girlhood playmates. I heard Mary arranging one affair over the telephone:

"You must come Thursday afternoon. You've heard me speak of Irma Conway, my friend from Washington? She is only with us a few days and I know you will like her. If you think it's quite

safe, I'll invite you and Jack for dinner later, but I warn you that Irma is a beauty and Jack is so susceptible I thought you had better come Thursday and tell me if you think it safe for me to ask him. . . . Oh, my husband? . . . I certainly should worry if he weren't so deep in politics that he can't think of anything else . . . Yes, you see he's in love with the whole world . . . No, he has no time to fall in love with just one woman . . . Well, wait till you see Irma. You'll say that I must feel very sure of him to have such a siren in the house . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Well, good-bye, I'll see you Thursday."

Let it be understood that I listened to this sort of thing, with variations, for several days! Always during that trying time I was in sight of and near Irma and never with her. Furthermore, Mary invited the most interesting, effective men of our acquaintance and commented enthusiastically on the charm that Irma held for them all, regardless of age, position or previous condition of servitude. I found it rather hard to bear this. In fact, I conceived a mild dislike for many of my old friends.

In some adroit manner Mary made it quite impossible that Irma and I should ever be left alone for more than a few minutes. Then Sunday morning Mary apparently reversed her policy with one of those sudden shifts always so surprising to me and yet so essentially feminine. I think possibly the idea occurred to her that Irma might think she did not dare to leave us together.

We were sitting in the living room reading the newspaper and chatting desultorily about the party of the previous night when Mary walked in clad in riding costume.

"I'm going for a ride," she announced. "I feel the need of air and exercise. I called up the stables and Joe is bringing Gypsy to the end of the bridle path. I'll be back around noon. Bye, bye."

I read the paper with unseeing eyes for a few minutes and then, glancing up, found Irma looking at me with an amused smile.

"How well Mary looks in her riding clothes," she remarked. "You have a very clever, attractive wife, Rodney."

Twice I attempted to speak and each time stopped something that sounded utterly inane, as it struck upon the inner ear that is the remorseless critic of the self-conscious. At the third effort I managed to remark:

"Once upon a time in Springfield I foolishly boasted that we would never be strangers again. Yet now I feel as though you were very remote from me."

"You don't understand women, do you, Rodney?"

"I'm quite convinced that I do not."

"You don't understand why Mary invited me here. You don't understand why I came. Most of all you don't understand why Mary suddenly leaves us *en tête-à-tête*."

"I confess that all these things are largely mysteries to me!"

"Would it help you if I suggested that nine times out of ten a woman does what she most wants to do, and that the tenth time she does just what she doesn't want to do, in order to make people believe that she does want to do what she doesn't want to do?"

"It sounds too mathematically exact."

"Then let me add that there are a great many exceptions to most rules and that exceptions are more interesting to women than rules. However, you should at least know the rules, so that you may recognize the significance of exceptions."

"I'm afraid I'll never know which are the nine times and which is the tenth."

"Then let me continue the lesson," she advised. "You see I'm interested in you, Rodney, or I shouldn't bother about your education."

"For those kind words many thanks."

I rose and bowed deeply.

"It's this way, Rodney: If I were interested in a married man, or if he were interested in me, more than his wife might approve, I shouldn't care to accept his wife's invitation to be a house guest. Now I have a suspicion that Mary thinks that such an interest exists here, on one side or the other, or perhaps on both. She invites me practically as a test —as an unasked question. In a clever way she made that clear in her letter. I think she wrote that she was very anxious to have me come, unless circumstances were such that I could not possibly see my way clear to tarrying here during my trip east. I

may not have quoted the phrase correctly but the possible double meaning was very neat—and I got it! That note was to me like a challenge—and it's always been a failing of mine that I hate to be dared. So I came. Perhaps I shouldn't have done it. But I'm sure that my conduct since has been unimpeachable."

"You are delightfully frank. That's one thing I love about you. You grasp a nettle far more bravely than I do. For a week I've been wanting to talk with you alone. Here is the opportunity and I am tongue-tied."

"Why?"

"Really, Irma, I don't know. Despite the indication I may have given in Springfield, it has not been a desire to make love to you. I want to talk about life with you—what it's all about—what we are trying to do with it—because I want to know how you feel about it—because it seems that I can get so much more out of a woman's ideas than I can out of a man's. I know a lot about men's ideas—many things that I wish I didn't know. But I confess I know very little about women. I've known so few women at all well. I've had very little curiosity to know many women well. So that when I find a tremendous desire to know you it seems to me a matter of tragic importance. Yet I suppose Mary would feel that such an interest in another woman reflected discredit on her——"

"And you don't wish to do anything during my visit to reflect discredit on her."

"That's about it. Yet it isn't fair play, Irma. Confound it! Women don't play their own rules. But they demand that their men should."

"No exceptions for the men," she laughed. "We make the exceptions, Rodney, for ourselves."

"Let me tell you something. Maybe you'll think less of me for telling this, but I think that I have a right. There's an old sweetheart of Mary's who comes to town now and then and she insists on taking lunch with him. She told me about it a few times until it got on my nerves and I became disagreeable. Then she said that she could see that she could not be frank with me. Now I don't know whether she sees him or not, but naturally I think she does.

"Don't think that I imagine this is a dangerous interest. It doesn't worry me that way. It just annoys me and at times I think it is wrong for me to be annoyed. Whatever reason she may have for breathing now and then on the old ashes is really her affair. It's her privilege. Marriage shouldn't be a slavery of the mind. What annoys me most is the thought that if I wanted to spend a Sunday afternoon talking with some old sweetheart of mine Mary would be deeply offended."

"You forget, Rodney, that a woman has more to protect than a man. A woman has her home to safeguard. A man may make a passable home for himself, without a woman in it. But the woman who loses her man loses her home. When a woman risks her home you may know that she is really in love."

"Or in sight of a better home."

"That wasn't nice of you, Rodney. It isn't like you to be so nasty."

"I'm sorry I said that now. But there is a tigerish cruelty in the way even apparently gentle women play the game with men, that calls for bitter comment."

"And how about the careless cruelty of men?"

"At least it isn't calculated."

"But it hurts just the same."

"Tell me, Irma, do you think there's any good reason why I shouldn't like you, and enjoy being with you? Do you think that my having such an interest is disloyalty to Mary?"

She half-closed her eyes with a kindly but tantalizing smile.

"Just what is your interest in me, Rodney?"

"My dear lady, you know perfectly well how much I enjoy your society."

"That doesn't answer me. I'll ask another question. Would you like Mary to enjoy another man's society to the same extent?"

"That's very clever, because if I say, yes, it may indicate that my interest in you is not very intense. But I will say this: I think that, if Mary could get as much enjoyment from association with another man, as much increased zest of living, as I get from brief companionships with you, I should have no right to deny that to her."

"Nevertheless you would object."

"Conventionally, perhaps, I should. I'm not

questioning Mary's conventional right to resent my liking for you. It isn't quite *comme il faut.* But I refuse to feel that I am morally wrong in having —an affection for you. It's a fact. I don't think the fact is wrong."

She laughed.

"I was thinking," she said, "that a dirty face is often a fact. But it ought to be washed."

"Do you think I should use soap and water?"

"I'd hate to have you lose your interesting complexion."

"Irma, I don't want to be sentimental, but, having found you, I should hate to lose you. You give me a sense of certain things in life. I get feelings about life from you. There's no disrespect in that for Mary. I get many things from Mary, as I hope she does from me. But I haven't the sublime egotism to think that Mary can get everything from me that any man could give her. So why should Mary feel that I can realize all that there is in womankind from her?"

I have tried to give a fair sketch of this talk of ours. There was much more of it, all very intimate and yet essentially not lovemaking—just groping for ideas about the parts men and woman can play in each other's lives. Since Irma has left I have thought a great deal about this. It seems to me that here is one of the great questions. I resent vehemently the "French novel" attitude toward it. Of course physical attraction plays a large part in the relationships of men and women. But if phys-

ical desire and satisfaction were all that there is in it, what a cheap thing life would be—a chemical formula—attraction, union, reproduction—for what purpose? Yet out of this mating instinct arise greater instincts—dreams of achievements—dreams of making life something better than it is. Experience and control desire; and how the imagination soars! Vision comes. Illusion blooms. God grows.

At the end of all my thinking I return to that thought—the more I yearn, the more I seek to ennoble things often called base, the more I feel something better than I am begin to stir within, begin to rise out of me—something too great, too clean, for a small, earthy body—the sense of a god within that grows.

CHAPTER XIX

The God Who Grew

IT is Saturday afternoon and I am alone in my office. The door is locked and I pray that the telephone will remain silent. I've been doing some hard thinking and I'm going to attempt some hard writing. The egoism which makes this writing seem worth while does not assure me that any publisher will ever think that what I have written is worth printing. If it ever is printed I know that I shall be criticised for having expressed myself so frankly, and particularly for having written so intimately about those who are near and dear to me. But I shall see to it that nothing is published until anyone who may be hurt by candor is no longer living. I do not believe that truth can harm the dead.

Mary often remarks critically that I love the whole world. Hence she suggests that I am incapable of truly loving one person. Mary does not understand. I cannot say honestly that I love the world, that I am a lover of humanity. People in mass seem to me short-sighted, dull, and alternately exasperating and pitiful. Not that I feel particularly superior. On the contrary I find my own actions shortsighted, dull, exasperating and pitiful. I love neither the whole world nor myself. But I

do feel that I am a freer human being than most of my fellows. My parents let me develop without strapping artificial supports to my legs to relieve their fear that I might be unable to stand alone. Fortunately no teacher fitted me with special mental lenses through which to obtain a carefully distorted vision of life. Therefore I have no inherited religious dogmas and no educated prejudices. Of course I am mentally shaped by inheritance just as I am heir to the bodily characteristics of my ancestors. But, as the world goes, I am unusually free and have never provided myself with a strait-jacket for my thoughts. A notable analyst of men and women once told me that I had the credit of my lack of convictions.

Now, lack of convictions is a distressful state of mind. To relieve this distress I have acquired a faith—a faith in something which I have gradually come to describe as The Purpose. I call this a faith, but it is not a blind, assured faith. It is a changing thing. Some days all things seem quite clear. At other times I feel swept out into an ocean of doubts. Yet the sense of Purpose in life persists and in this sense my part in life seems to be to live fully and deeply, to think hard and to write down my thought and my life as the days go by, in the hope that in this revelation I may help a little to set other souls free from ancient taboos which may have had some use in the dawning of intelligence, but which persist beyond their vital years to repress and to confine the modern mind.

Let me attempt a dangerous example of this thought. There is the ancient taboo about keeping the Sabbath holy—a very wise provision for a rest from daily labor on one day in every seven—a very wise provision for a day for the soul, a day for good thoughts and good works, a day for devotion to God. But the taboo that one particular day is sacred has lost much of its force in the expansion of modern life whereby, on the one hand, many find in the Sabbath a day of pleasure, a day of amusement and sports, and on the other hand many find it merely another day of toil.

Free modern thought rejects the ancient taboo, rejects the idea of a divine will requiring a day of worship, but accepts the divine law that man should have one day in every seven for rest and change of interest. Yet the taboo persists, constantly hampering and confining a free, intelligent division of the week and a free intelligent use of the day of rest and change, with an arbitrary, unreasoning demand for an arbitrary, unreasoning observance of an ancient form.

From such bondage as this mankind must some day work itself free. The so-called divine will which issues a command through human mouths is an unreal thing and its acceptance is mental slavery. The divine purpose which persuades men through their divine minds is very real and its understanding is the obligation and the happiness of a free soul.

The "one day rest in seven" is at the moment a part of the political creed of our insurgents. It is

interesting to note how this demand meets response through the masses of hard-working men and women. They know that they need the day of rest. But if we made our rallying cry "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" these same masses might give us the approval of their lips but their hearts would not be stirred. Yet what could be more holy than a day of lifted burdens, a day when the weary back is straightened, the tired eyes rest and the spirit is left free to contemplate life, to enjoy living, a day of that true worship that comes from love of life? I must believe that any God worthy of worship would prefer that His children should enjoy the life he gave them, rather than that they should fear His wrath.

Time and time again I have attempted to make some statement of my faith because it seems to me so much more intense, vital and workable in my own life than the creeds of many of my orthodox friends are in their lives. Hence it seems that it should be possible to express it in some way to meet the common approval of others who feel as I do. Finally, I have set down a few words which are not a creed but rather a suggestion, a hint of a faith, a religious motive for life that may be professed by those who worship God under different names, through different forms, but in a common trust that life is good.

MY FAITH

I have a faith, an unbounded faith, in the Purpose. I believe in the gradual bettering of mankind. I believe in the service of Truth and the futility of Falsehood. I believe in that righteousness which is the essence of Christianity. But I have no sense of personality about it. My thought of any Guiding Power of the universe is inchoate. That which I could call God must be so far above my finite conceptions that I cannot visualize Him at all. I think my "God" is the God of all Christians, but I do not personify Him. Therefore, I cannot appeal to him by words, but only by actions, tacitly submitted for His approval, or, in more accurate language, devoted to the service of the Purpose.

This is neither atheism nor agnosticism. It is a religion; but it will not permit me in full honesty to take part in the forms of worship prescribed by any particular church, since in so doing I should be attempting to formulate, and thus to delimit by narrow human ideas that which I believe surpasses human imagination.

It appeals to me as a greater tribute to Deity than mere love or fear, to acknowledge the simple truth, that the Universe and Life so far overwhelm mortal reasoning that the Source, the Power and the Purpose can never be identified or understood by our tiny brains.

The finite cannot possibly comprehend the infinite. Finite explanations of creation and its infinite purposes are usually presumptuous and pathetic. I prefer, and to be sincere I am required, to adopt that blind faith which seems to me a nobler worship of the Divine than reverence for the dogmatic symbolism of a creed. I am not indifferent to the invaluable service of the orthodox Christian churches. But their formalism is more disturbing than satisfying to my religious yearning to serve the great Concept, which has no time nor place nor name, but simply is; whose Purpose must be fulfilled and whose Glory is to be.

In what I have written there is no word of man or woman. To my mind the purpose of life is sexless. Yet in living life the relations of men and women and their influence upon each other are all important. The sex element is dynamic. Men and women energize each other.

I have been drifting along writing generalizations about religion, but when I stop, look and listen, I know that the motive power of my thought comes not from contacts with a world of men but from the interplay of my thought with the thoughts of women. Just now Irma and Mary—and to a lesser degree, Jeannette—give me my mental grip on life. I feel that if I lost contact with all three I should be like one pole of an electric battery—a dead thing. The current that flows between these women and me is a conscious, vital force. All else seems chemical, mechanical, unconscious.

Most of my living has been a working with men to do things in a world of men. I have enjoyed somewhat the struggle for success. I have found at times the same elation as when I ran races and played football in college—the zest of the game, the physical thrill of matching one will against another. But as in college, so in business, always when the glow of competition has faded has come a feeling that in itself the struggle was meaningless, that it must be identified as a means to some end to give it any lasting value.

Whenever I have sought some purpose which this

striving might fulfill, my thought, groping, stumbling and then leaping has found—woman, or, let me say, man and woman. In the effort of man and woman to know each other I have found that they learn to know themselves. I have found a struggle, an endeavor, which seemed itself not a mere means but an end itself—an end which might be called in pedantic phrasing, the development of character. And is this not the purpose of the individual life, or at least the immediate purpose, which is about as far as the little human mind is able to explore?

Is not the great achievement of mankind through all the ages the development of the power of thought? The power of thought of the mass comes from character development in the individual. Does this not explain why the world in its lasting judgments pays tribute to greatness even though malevolent, pays tribute to its strong minds even though they radiated their force from weak bodies? The evil that the ambition of Napoleon wrought upon his own and succeeding generations may far outweigh any material benefits which he conferred. Yet he has given mankind a dream, a vision of power, that gives his name a glory even in the thought of those who condemn utterly his deeds. While knowledge of the diseased, ignoble life of Oscar Wilde remains it will furnish no bad example to lead youth astray, but rather aid others to avoid his tragic weaknesses. But the mind that could leave the world even *De Profundis* alone, has given to man-

kind the inspiration for soul growth that must live and flower into times when the memory of one soiled life has been wholly lost.

There is, of course, a danger in such philosophy as this. One may regard his emotions as too important, forgetting that all emotional experience may not mean mental growth and that man has been given a brain with which to value his emotions and to control them. For example, my emotions might readily deceive me as to Mary and Irma; and I might imagine that that stimulation which comes to me from association with Irma was potential with greater experience of life than the less keen inspiration that I find in Mary. Recently this possible error has been made very clear to me.

Mary and I both have long desired children. But gradually our hopes have dulled. Now we have a renewed hope—more than that—an expectation. Thus a new and very great interest has come into our lives and one which is drawing us daily closer to each other. I wish I could write down the spiritual change that this anticipation is making in both of us. For the moment it seems to me profound, but I must wait until I can look back upon the phase through which we are passing and comprehend its full meaning.

. . . . .

Long, dragging weeks have passed since I laid down my pen at the ring of the telephone that brought me that dreadful summons to come home.

I have been beaten down by the "bludgeoning of chance" and I take up the effort of writing again, not because I wish to do so, but because I feel that I must somehow work my way up and out of this sodden depression. My other work does not interest me. Perhaps this may.

The telephone bell called me home to find that scented, chintz-hung room of Mary's turned into a hospital. A doctor and a nurse imperatively summoned were working over the white form stretched out on the gay enameled bed which was covered with a rubber sheeting. The trembling maid met me in the hall and began an unintelligible explanation of what had happened. I pushed her aside. The surgeon waved me back as I entered the bedroom. I stood irresolutely in the doorway until finally he straightened up from his task and motioned me into the next room.

At first I could not understand him. Then I began to get the simple facts behind his professional terms. Conception had occurred in the wrong place, and with growth had come the inevitable hemorrhage. It was too late. She could not live. Yes, I could be with her. Nothing could injure—or help—her.

I knelt beside the bed with intolerable anguish, tortured with a hundred futile regrets. A pathetically weak arm slipped over my head. I tried to whisper comfort but could only give voice to tears. Once her eyes opened for a momentary stare of terror that struck into me like a knife. Then her gaze softened tenderly and she moved her hand

gently on my head. A wonderful light of peace came upon her white face. That was the end. She seemed to drift out of my arms. I was holding a body that was no longer her.

I can't write of the days that followed. I did not live through them. I merely moved through a series of meaningless events. Everything real had ceased. Then slowly the real world reasserted itself. But it was a new world, wherein all the old values seemed to have changed. I found myself sitting in the office one morning looking at a large check that had just arrived in payment of a long overdue account.

I thought: "Now I can pay up those bills that Mary has been worrying over." Then I realized that Mary had ceased to worry, that I could never again relieve her of any trouble. Suddenly her little extravagances took on a new appearance. They were opportunities for me to do things for her. There would be no more of those opportunities. I had the feeling that I had nothing left to work for. There was no one who needed me. What a deadening thought: "no one who needed me." The unreality of the past days broke into a terrible reality of loss and I burst into a flood of tears. I was back in the world again—no longer a world of doubts and vexations, a world of sorrow. Sorrow is the most intense reality of life. In suffering there is truth.

Now I know many things. Now I know that I loved Mary. It was not for what she could give to me, but for what I could give to her. She was

my opportunity and I never realized it until she was gone. Through her I caught a glimpse of the Purpose and yet in my blindness I often thought that she stood between me and self-realization. I had believed that I knew Christ's teaching. But only now did I understand that one can only find his own soul through losing it in the soul of another.

Still dimly and yet more clearly than ever before I see the Purpose. To work toward it through one other life has now been denied to me. But of this much I am sure, that, at least for him to whom there is any vision given, there is an obligation to serve; if through one life it should be a happy service; if through many lives there may be less joy in the labor but perhaps the hope of greater achievement in the end.

BOOK IV

PURPOSE

CHAPTER XX

Power

THERE is too little of politics in what I have written to make it thoroughly represent my experience. But I have been much impressed with the triviality of political detail. Its importance is exaggerated by those engaged and its narration is certain to bore everyone not immediately concerned. All that I need say now is that after many years of petty work full of disappointment and disillusionment I came finally to the achievement of a certain position and influence in the presidential campaign of 1916.

My prominent position in the Republican party made my final decision to support Wilson against Hughes a matter of some national interest. This decision, I may remark, was one of the most difficult and I think one of the least self-regardful that I have ever made. All my affection and respect for Colonel Roosevelt urged me to follow him in support of the Republican nominee. Furthermore, I expected confidently that Hughes would win. Even if Wilson should win I had no anticipation of any personal profit from espousing his cause. He was more noted for ignoring faithful supporters than for

rewarding them, as some of my closest friends in his camp had assured me with much bitterness.

Yet, as the campaign progressed I felt more and more repelled by the forces gathering behind Hughes. During the summer I found it necessary to travel half across the country to expose a mean endeavor by the Republican campaign management to put Roosevelt himself in the position of truckling to men whose purposes he detested but whose votes were desired for Hughes.

While listening to my leader's cyclonic wrath against those whom he was doing his best to aid and who had met his generosity with this treachery, my decision was made. When peace had been restored and he had gone forward on his hard mission to aid in the election of the man he regarded as the lesser evil, I left him without a statement of my purpose but resolved that such strength as I had should be exerted for the candidate who at least expressed and inspired the higher ideals, even though his performances had not equaled his professions.

The election result gave me considerable prestige. I found, somewhat to my surprise, that I had some real influence in Washington. The government position which was offered me came with so slight an effort on my part and was pregnant with so many opportunities for doing something worth while that I accepted with little hesitation. I wondered when I did so if the fact that Irma was living in Washington affected my judgment. Ever since Mary's death I have been curiously sensitive to admitting to myself

any interest in Irma. Somehow it hasn't seemed quite fair to Mary that I should allow my thought to go to any other woman.

While Mary was alive I resented the idea that she had any right to monopolize all my interest in womankind. Yet it has seemed as though a respect for her memory required me to grant this monopoly to her after she had given her life in the effort to carry our lives forward into another generation. This feeling has kept me away from Irma since I have come to Washington. I have seen her a few times but she has answered my constraint with a seeming indifference which has hurt me, has made it easier for me to absorb myself in work and has prevented my loneliness of spirit from seeking consolation in her companionship.

As I write these words, I am sitting in my hotel room in the late evening. Over a jumbled mass of government buildings I can see the Washington monument, strongly illumined. Like the answer to a prayer it points steadily upward, seeking to direct the earth-walking leaders of a nation to turn their thoughts on high. We are on the verge of war—a plunge of one hundred million people into the greatest and most terrible conflict of all the ages of human knowledge. Tasks are imminent of heavier responsibility than ever assumed by any men of this or of probably any previous generation. Of what importance is my individual comfort or happiness or that of any other man charged with any part of this responsibility?

Soon we shall be separating husbands from wives and sons from mothers, some for a long time and some forever. We shall be destroying deliberately a host of lives and countless human aspirations; we shall be spending recklessly the accumulated treasures of business and family life with a ruthless demand that all individual happiness shall be sacrificed in a common adventure for the common welfare. We believe that we are utterly right in doing this, yet in our hearts we know that, as in every great human decision, we may be utterly wrong. And there beyond the window is that great, white finger pointing upward. Whether we do right or wrong, at least our purpose must be high, our endeavor must be lofty or else we must be self-condemned beyond all forgiveness.

Surely it is no time for me to be thinking of the love of a woman—unless perhaps of the love of one whose spirit has followed that great white finger into the Unknown. All the love that I can give to that woman will be free from any small passions that may weaken the hand or dim the eye that are called upon for utter service to the Purpose.

From the street below come the confused sounds of ordinary night life in a busy city. Street cars, automobiles, voices, the patter of many feet—all tell of people going about their customary business and pleasure seeking. I think of them as careless people, yet probably in every mind there is something of the thought which is in mine. Men who know that they must fight are wondering how long

a span of life is left for them; men who will not fight are speculating on their possibilities of sacrifice or profit. Women are clinging a little closer to their dear ones who have suddenly become more precious, more indispensable. Men of responsibility are walking less lightly, are thinking ahead with less confidence, are clenching their mental grip on a few ideas that seem to have fixed value in a time when most values are in flux.

While I have been writing I have been waiting for a summons. This afternoon I was informed that the President might wish to see me late in the evening and I stated that I would remain in my room until called.

. . . . .

The telephone bell rang. It was Irma. She said she would like to see me. She wanted to talk about some war work that she had in mind. She is living with the Grinsmores, acting as secretary to Mrs. Grinsmore, who has already organized two national women's aid societies which may find some usefulness in the coming struggle. Irma is skeptical but I have assured her that almost any organization may serve some good end—even a Grinsmore society. I told Irma that I must remain here, but I promised to see her to-morrow evening if possible. Her voice was very friendly. It gave me something of a thrill to hear her speak. But I cannot, I must not, allow myself the pleasure of seeking that thrill.

. . . . .

Now I have heard from the White House. In half an hour I am due for my appointment. In the work I see crowding before me there will be little time for writing. Perhaps this story will have no end, in which case I doubt if there has been any use in setting it down. If I find that I am to undergo any of the great hazards, in which I hope I may play some part, I shall arrange that this manuscript shall be destroyed in the event that I am not left to finish it. Up to the present moment I feel that my living has had little significance unless it has been the introduction to a life in which there shall be some real achievement, something to indicate that it is worth while to have faith in the Purpose.

CHAPTER XXI

Reaction

IT is December 11, 1918. For one year and a half I have been swinging into war work every ounce of energy which I could create. I have been inordinately busy, often working for weeks with no sense of accomplishment, then finding a thrill in a few vivid days that more than repaid for all the drudgery. War is horrible but it is high adventure. Even little moves in the great game are played with a stake of lives and fortunes that must give them tragic importance.

Once I acted as a special representative of the President in preventing the spread of a strike of freight handlers. As I sped north from Washington I chafed at every slowing down of the express train. A few hours' delay in reaching my destination might mean a loss of days in providing men to load the huge steamships whose cargoes were desperately needed "over there." A halt of days in delivery of supplies to the battle lines might mean a weakness at some vital point in a crucial moment. If the men filling those lines could not hold them until more men could be sent—the whole war might be lost. That one inconspicuous man traveling north from Washington should not be delayed an hour seemed a mat-

ter of vast consequence. Yet when I arrived it took me three days even to get the necessary leaders into one room where we could fight out differences of purpose and opinion across a small table. Three weeks passed before the trouble had been ironed out and I returned to Washington, utterly weary with the nervous strain, to be congratulated on the exceptional speed with which a difficult negotiation had been brought to a successful end.

All through the war work the contrast was forced upon me persistently between men who wore themselves down with the pace they set themselves and those placid official tape-weavers, to whom departmental rules and customs were a sacred ritual whose meticulous observance was of more vital interest than the smashing of the Hindenburg line. There was a continual contest wherein we irreverent civilians fought day and night to slash and pound our way through entanglements of red tape and barriers of official regulations which met us everywhere when we attempted to hurry anything through the government offices.

In various trips to the other side I found that conditions in some parts of officialdom were better and in some much worse than at home. Through the costly lessons of four years' fighting many lines for direct action in matters of military necessity had been laid out and were kept open. But in all political matters I found that our problems in America were refreshingly simple and our methods comparatively honest, when contrasted with the complicated in-

trigues of the politicians of the old world. In justice to our President I must say that he kept a spirit of high endeavor glowing as a radiant force, which welded separative desires and ambitions into a common national purpose of extraordinary strength.

Now the great national adventure is ended. Already I can see and feel the reaction that has come from straining idealisms beyond their normal power. Men and women alike show signs of weariness with being painfully good and sacrificingly noble and utterly brave. The most earnest war-workers have begun to look about them with a discontented feeling that somehow their pain and sacrifice and bravery has not profited them greatly for their futures. They observe the selfish and the greedy flaunting new fortunes in public places. They turn back to the old pre-war work and find it disorganized, worrisome and also very dull.

Last evening I had a long talk with Irma. We were both quite unhappy and much disillusioned. It is the first time that I have seen her since her marriage. The announcement reached me in Paris and the name of her husband, Captain Edson Fairfield, meant nothing to me. Last night she showed me his photograph and told me his story. He was a famous football player—at Princeton, I believe—some ten years ago. At the outbreak of the war he was working for a bond house in New York City. He came out of the first officers' training camp with the rank of captain—a fine figure in a uniform, strong, rough-hewn face, in every way appearing a natural

leader. In war as in football he was in his element and showed to best advantage.

Irma had met him several times in New York and Washington where her work with Mrs. Grinsmore's societies brought her into frequent contact with fledgling officers of some social prestige. She had been much attracted to him. His genuine desire to get across as soon as possible had appealed to her particularly. She was sickened with the desk-chair officers who crowded into Washington. Captain Fairfield had evidently quite rushed her off her feet so that when he had been finally assured of overseas service and had pleaded with her to marry him, she was really incapable of the same sort of consideration she would have given the question in normal times. Apparently he was giving so much and asking so little. Like most men of the young officer class he had acquired the attitude that he would not come back. He wanted only to realize for a short time the dream of his life, marriage to his ideal, and then he would gladly give his all to his country. So they were married.

Fairfield had fulfilled all her expectations as a soldier. He had made a distinguished record, had been decorated three times and was now a colonel. But her brief married experience and his letters had given Irma full knowledge that although Colonel Fairfield might be a husband of whom she could be proud, Mr. Fairfield was going to be a difficult husband with whom to spend the rest of her days. The banality of his interests in life had been a sad dis-

covery. Even as a money-maker his ten years' performance since leaving college was not impressive. He, himself, realized his limitations and, worst of all, seemed willing to accept them. He had even discussed with her the possibility of remaining in the army.

"I am not at all sure," she said drearily, "but what that would be the best career open to him. But I don't believe he would rise very far in the service. You know the requirements for higher command in the modern army are pretty severe."

"Perhaps he has never tried to develop himself," I suggested. "Life has not called upon him heavily. This new responsibility as a married man. . . . You might inspire him to broaden his capacities."

"Rodney," she answered, "I hate to say it, but he hasn't the ambition. He likes adventure, but not hard work. He rejects drudgery and he hasn't the imagination to go ahead by leaps."

"But he loves you," I said; "that must inspire him to some effort."

"He loves me, in his way, yes, he loves me now. He has loved many times before. It is that kind of love. He wouldn't love a taskmaster. I can't be that and hold his love. Is it wrong for me to talk this way? You're an old friend. I must talk to someone."

Her eyes were heavy with tears and her voice trembled. I rose and walked across the room. I had to move somewhere away from her as I suddenly felt myself drawn to kneel beside her chair and put

my arms about her. Standing at a safe distance I began to speak.

"Irma, I've been trying to be of a little service to my country in a time of war. Maybe I've been of some use, but there is no one who can tell me so and give me the thrill of personal appreciation. It is all very impersonal. I even know that I was not indispensable. If I had not done my job another man would have done it just as well or better. I should like to feel that I am of some real use to someone—that I can do for someone what no one else can do. Perhaps you might give me that chance. If I could help you and see in your eyes something that told me that I was of real service to another human being I should be quite happy. So if you care to confide in me it will be a favor to me."

"I want to confide in you," she said. "But I don't want to be unfair to him. He is fine and true and I have been proud of him—I am proud of him—as my soldier husband. But as Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield we will grow apart, not together. Our ambitions, our interests are so different. It was part of the war madness that we married. Even he understands that. We both knew it before he sailed, but we pretended to each other."

When I returned to my room last night I was sore in spirit. I had kept myself from saying anything of what I felt, but I knew the full bitterness of Irma's mistake—and of mine. In the old days when I denied to myself my love for her I did it in self-protection. I pretended to be doubtful of the

extent of my love for her in order to make life without her more tolerable. I deceived myself to such an extent that when the war came on I did not tell Irma anything of my hidden thought, in order that I might be wholly free to do what seemed to be my appointed task.

Perhaps Irma did not love me but I feel that she deceived herself somewhat as I did. I am not sure that she loves me now. I must go on repeating what I said to myself so many times in the past, that I am not sure that we would be well mated. But this I do know, that each has an appeal for the other, that we are helpful to each other, that we should have known each other better, that we should have come closer long ago in order that we might know the value of what we could do for one another. This intimacy might have saved us both from what I feel is much impending unhappiness.

Self-denial has been made a virtue in itself by much of that religious teaching which gives us our moral traditions. To deny oneself an action that one desires may be necessary or wise or righteous. But, to deny the existence of a desire that one feels, to deny its contemplation, consideration and valuation is a denial of actual experience. It has been well said that "to deny one's own experiences is to put a lie into the lips of one's own life."

While I was married, I insisted so far as I could, on denying the existence of a strong interest in Irma, lest by admitting it to myself this should interfere with a proper fulfillment of my obligations to Mary.

Then when the war came on I put this lie into my lips again, partly as a tribute to Mary's memory and partly to keep myself free for a full devotion of all my energies to governmental work. In all this I denied to myself that inspiration which thought of Irma has always given me, that aspiring desire which drives men to do their best, which lifts the imagination beyond the immediate task and gives vision.

Now I am mentally clouded through lying to myself, uncertain of my feeling for Irma as well as of her feeling for me. Yet these feelings are real forces in our lives and both of us should know them as they are, their power and their value.

. . . . .

Another month has passed and my work in Washington is nearly finished. I have seen much of Irma. The more I see of her, watching the interplay of her thought and her emotion, the deeper is the devotion which I feel, the more intense is my exaltation in her presence and the more powerful is her attraction for me in absence. The day without sight of her is empty, but even her voice over the telephone stirs music in my heart that carries me happily through succeeding hours. There is a light in her eyes that gives me her thought of me more plainly than any words. I should not dare to say that she loves me but at least I know that I bring her good cheer.

In a literal way I have not made love to Irma. I have not said that I adore her, that I wish to be with her in every hour. We have simply been to-

gether so much and have talked ourselves out to each other so completely, that we know quite intensely how we care for each other. According to bell, book and candle ritual I suppose this intimacy must be labeled a wicked thing, yet we who have felt it know that it is not at all wicked, but very good and beautiful.

When Irma's soldier husband returns next month I shall have returned to Chicago and nothing of my presence will disturb this reunion. But if she thinks of what we have been to each other and in so thinking gives less value to what she and her husband can be to each other, is that knowledge a wrong to him? If this is a wrong then should the right relationship between husband and wife be a consecrated deception? Should each feel bound in honor to put a false undervaluation on every interest in any other man or woman, in order to maintain a fictitious value for their interests in each other? To substitute such an agreed falsity for truth, as the foundation for success in marriage, seems to me to insure unhappy homes.

For a woman of Irma's intelligence any permanent false appraisement of her husband would be impossible. She will value their marriage according to her standards of what a marriage should be, rather than by any comparison with what it could be with anyone else. If she believes that it cannot be made to approach what marriage should be to her she will rebel against its bondage. Whatever others might think I feel assured that she will consider only Colonel

Fairfield and herself in passing judgment. I shall not be in the picture. Superficial men and women may compare their mates with other possible mates, but those who have brains as well as emotions will judge their mates by their ideals.

It seems a bit foreign to my mood to speak of ideals. For the time I feel as though mine were in the dust. I have given up my official position to take the position of general counsel for a company in Chicago, which, as I know very well, regards my Washington connections and influence as a larger asset than my legal ability. On all sides I see men scrambling out of public work into opportunities for private advantage. Patriotic fervor seems to have reached its climax on Armistice Day. With the morning after, came the realization that the wonderful common adventure had ended and that the old life of every man for himself was about to be reasserted.

On every hand I have heard men talking of their duties to their families and to themselves, expressing sentiments in themselves laudable and yet combined with a certain cynicism as to their future duties to society in general. I have a hard feeling that I have sacrificed what might have been a great love and possibly an ideal home, that I have deprived my mother of happiness which she deserves richly, that I have denied myself the money gains that would mean ease and pleasure, that I have lived frugally, that I have made myself oblivious to simple and not dishonest means of self-enrichment, and that in the

days to come I may wonder what I accomplished worth all these costs. I am sure that this is only a temporary reaction. I believe that I should choose the same course again under the same conditions. But there seems no justification for continuing this course now.

Therefore, I am going back to Chicago, intent on making money, determined to attain a strong material position in a materialistic world. Already in Europe are beginning the quarrels over the spoils of their victory—of our victory it seems to me. Hard voices are rising throughout the nation demanding that we seize our share of the spoils. The idealists have had their day inspiring sacrifice, and now the plunderers are rising again to resume their ancient leadership. They will show us how to harvest golden fruits from the fields of death.

I don't intend to join the plunderers but I intend to establish myself in the class of those who will not be their victims. And I perceive that the near future is going to be a hard time for the humble. The burdens of this mad cataclysm must be loaded upon some shoulders, and the humble folk have ever been the burden-carriers in times of the reckoning for the madness of their masters.

CHAPTER XXII

Intermezzo

THE summer is nearly over. I have had some playtime after several months of absorbing work. In a business way I have been quite successful. I have acquired a substantial interest in the Fanning Company and aided to make that interest a valuable one. Our oil operations put me in the way of several opportunities for private investment out of which I have been able to turn over sufficient safe bonds to provide a fair support for my mother regardless of what may happen to me. This has lifted one worry from me and made me feel freer from pressing obligations to anyone else than I have felt for many years.

In the spring an unexpected event affected deeply the current of my thought. Jeannette's husband was killed in an outlaw raid on the properties in Mexico of which he had charge. Jeannette herself barely escaped the same or a worse fate. My first information of the tragedy came in a telegram which she sent me from El Paso, asking me to telegraph funds so that she could come to Chicago where she expected to collect Jim's life insurance. After her arrival there was considerable delay and some difficulty in getting the money.

She stayed in Chicago nearly a month and I learned all about her situation. Appreciating the hazards of his work Jim had carried twenty-five thousand dollars of life insurance, and this with some small savings was about all she had for the future. She was practically alone in the world except for an uncle in Boston, with whom she had never been very friendly and who was a man of small means.

When I first met Jeannette the change in her was shocking. She seemed much older than I, her hair was quite gray, her face haggard and her eyes desperately weary. As the days went by I grew more accustomed to some of these appearances and in many ways she changed. As the strain of recent years wore off under peaceful living in a quiet uptown hotel, her old vivacity returned. Her eyes brightened, color came back into her cheeks and she even took on flesh. Still the impression of a beautiful life deeply scarred remained to make its constant appeal to my sympathy.

I really wanted to persuade her to make her home in Chicago. I wished to urge her to stay so that we could be together. I saw her almost every day and enjoyed being with her immensely. Yet I had no desire at all to ask her to marry me. In fact, I was devotedly interested in Irma and chafing at the delay in some business which I expected would take me to Washington. Nevertheless, companionship with Jeannette was full of charm and I hated the thought of her establishing a new home near Boston as she was planning.

One of her oldest and dearest friends was the head of a girls' school, the one in which Jeannette was teaching at the time of her marriage. This woman had asked Jeannette to come and live with her for a time with a view to taking up her teaching again in the Fall if she felt inclined to do it. It seemed the most natural and, in fact, the only opening for starting a new life which was presented to her.

It was not until the night before she left Chicago that it even occurred to me as a possibility that Jeannette and I could ever be anything to each other except very dear friends. That evening we went out for dinner to one of the open-air gardens that had just started the summer season. It was a soft, warm evening. There was a full moon that gave even the tawdry surroundings a magic beauty. The music was good and the dance floor was not crowded.

"I haven't had a chance to learn any of these new dances," she said, with a sad smile, "and I don't feel like dancing anyhow—not that I should not, you understand. Jim didn't believe in that sort of mourning. But I don't feel like hopping around. Perhaps if they ever play a waltz, a slow one, I might like to try, to see if I've forgotten."

Eventually a waltz was played—an old familiar tune—we had danced to it in Cambridge—oh, how many years before! And as we waltzed the years dropped away. The lights around the dance floor had been turned off and the moonlight showed a sweet young face with shining eyes under the droop-

ing hat. It was Jeannette of the empty inn at Bald Pate, Jeannette of the fog on the marshes, that I held again in my arms, Jeannette of the unquenchable spirit of pure love, that gives itself for the joy of giving. I held her a little closer and her hand moved lightly across my arm, like the ghost of a caress.

We walked back to our table arm in arm but without speaking and sat silent for some time. Then I spoke, clumsily:

"It's the same old moon a-shining, isn't it? Do you remember that song?"

"Yes," she said, "I remember, same old moon, same old tune, but it's not the same old girl!"

"Disregarding superficials," I remarked, "I should say that it was very much the same girl."

"Oh, no, no! It's a very different girl, Rodney. That was a girl of dreams. This a girl who knows, who knows what life can be—how dreadful a thing life can be!"

"But, knowing how dreadful life can be should also make one appreciate life when it is good."

"I wasn't thinking of terrible things in themselves," she answered. "I was thinking of how a bad start, or a series of unhappy events, can destroy all life's good possibilities, leaving one to face years of empty living. That is how dreadful life can be!"

I could think of nothing comforting to say so I remained silent, and after a little time she spoke again:

"Nothing of my thought of Jim is bitter. It is

all very sweet. We had much happiness even though we lived amid alarms. Now he is gone and I am once more alone. I felt lonely before we were married but—now, now I feel—oh, so utterly alone! I had my chance to choose a life companion. I wanted companionship for life. A few years pass and it is done. I don't wish that I had chosen someone else. But fate seems so unkind. Some women only want a man for a few years; but one thing that drew me to Jim was the certainty that Jim wanted me for life and that he would never change. Perhaps that is why I decided to give you up, Rodney."

"Did you think I would change?"

"I knew you would change. Perhaps we might have changed together and so remained the same to each other. But I wasn't sure that I would and I knew that you must change."

"Why? Why? Did you think I was fickle?"

"Oh, not light minded, but just impossible minded. You had mental attitudes that could not last. You did not know yourself. You were essentially a boy who must grow up. Perhaps you always will be. You haven't stopped changing yet. You were interesting, I might say quite lovable, but a most uncertain partner for a life journey."

"You think that I am still that sort."

"You have settled down somewhat, but rather from necessity than desire, I should guess. I know that you are still experimenting with yourself and

you would undoubtedly continue the experiment in marriage."

"Suddenly I see myself as a most unstable person. Evidently you would advise me never to marry—for the sake of the wife whom I should make unhappy."

"No. I should advise you never to marry a woman who wants to settle down and be comfortable. I doubt if you will ever settle down or become comfortable."

"And you, Jeannette, you want to settle down and be comfortable?"

"Yes, I do. You see I am rejecting you again, although this time I wasn't asked!"

"But you realized that you might be?"

"No, I think your interest is located elsewhere. Too bad the lady is married."

"Why did you think that?"

"Because you have talked so much lately about the proper attitude for a man in love with a married woman, that I knew it must be your most recent and unsolved problem in life."

"Jeannette, you are almost malicious. The great problem I am really studying now is how I can know and fulfill the purpose of my being,—my turbulent mind having the present obsession that there is some purpose in every being."

"But there's a woman in your purpose, Rodney; a very attractive woman I am sure; which, of course, makes this purpose also attractive."

"You are playing with my serious, although unstable, emotions," I said with mock severity.

"You ought to have someone play with them, now and then," she suggested. "I think you take them far too seriously."

"Would you be willing to stay in Chicago for a few weeks longer to lighten my ponderous spirit? I don't know how to state my suggestion respectably but I assure you that I make it most respectfully."

"I would not be willing!" she retorted, with a very friendly laugh. "Nor am I willing to stay in this garden any longer this evening. In another hour you'll be making love to me and as I'm not the woman of your purpose I'll show you that at least I'm a purposeful woman. I'm going home."

CHAPTER XXIII

TRIANGLE

IT was some weeks after that dinner talk with Jeannette when I put the question which she had suggested to Irma. We were sitting in that tiny apartment which she and Colonel Fairfield called "The Cell."

"If you were planning an ideal marriage, Irma, would it be to settle down with a congenial companion and be comfortable?"

"Heaven protect me! No!" she exploded. "I never want to settle down, or be comfortable. That means to stop growing and I want life to keep on growing even after it begins to decay—if you can imagine such a combination."

"I somewhat guessed your answer. How about the Colonel? What would he say?"

"Let's not talk about Ed—because if I start I know I shall say too much. When he said he was going out to-night I told him I should ask you to come up, and he was quite unpleasant about it."

"You never told me before that he objected to me. He has always treated me in a friendly fashion. In fact, he told me that he was very glad to have me here, because he said you liked to talk about books and things that he had never taken much interest in, and he was glad to have someone around who had

those interests. He has been very nice about it except that his self-depreciation has embarrassed me somewhat. He is quite genuine."

"He is genuine in that," she said. "But he has been getting a little jealous and I've been thinking that we were seeing so much of each other that it was really unfair to expect him to continue to be pleased. To-day, however, was the first outward sign of his feeling. It has disturbed me and made me think."

"Does Colonel Fairfield expect to re-establish himself in New York?" I asked irrelevantly.

"Probably," she answered. "His work here with the department will be over in a few months, unless he should be assigned to the historical section and decide to stay in the service. That would mean years of very useful work, in a way. But it would only confirm Edson in his weaknesses. I told him flatly the other day that if he decided to stay in the service I should leave him. It would be utterly impossible for me to tolerate such a life for a year. Therefore, why should I begin the hopeless effort?"

"And he said?"

"He said that he had practically made up his mind to stay in the service until I delivered my ultimatum but that he could not think of giving me up—he would prefer to give up his chosen career—he would go back to New York and resume his old work again. His company has written him that he can come back to his former position this Fall, if he wishes. So that is what he expects to do."

"I see the position you are in."

"Of course you do; it is the worst possible one. He gives up his desires in order to have me. Then how can I do anything except go through with him? But, Rodney, Ed and I are so very badly mated, we can't make a success of our lives so long as we stay together. Each of us drags the other down. It may be that this War Department service would be just the thing for him—steady, useful work, making no special demand for great talent yet carrying with it the accomplishment of something worth doing, an endless task wherein even a man of limited ability might work himself into an authoritative position that would broaden him almost in spite of himself.

"On the other hand, if Edson goes back to New York he will slip into his place with the easy getting, easy spending crowd, most of whom really do very little to earn a living—a crowd in which a man with his lack of ambition will never rise very far and yet never be forced to work very hard to keep going. Our lives will drift along until I go frantic with the monotony and futility of living. Some day I shall explode. I won't be able to stand it many years. Then I shall be responsible for having spoiled his best chance for himself. I can read the story to the end and it is all wrong, because we started wrong, because we shouldn't have started at all."

"Do you think that you ought to stop, now?" I asked.

"I know that I should," she answered quickly. "It

isn't that I don't dare. You know, Rodney, that I'm not afraid. I haven't even the worst fear of all—the fear to begin. Perhaps that is a great weakness, that I do not fear to begin. But I feel that perhaps I'm shirking my appointed task. Perhaps I undervalue him. Perhaps I could do what he says that I could do: inspire him to achieve. I don't believe it. I don't believe it. But he does. I dread to break his hope. I feel it would be wrong."

"Irma, do you think that a man who feels that he must lean on a woman, will ever get far so long as he has a woman to lean upon?"

I should not have said that, but the words seemed to come out ahead of my thought.

"He doesn't lean on me," she said, in quick defense. "He looks upon me as a reason for doing things which otherwise he would not care to do. He hasn't many illusions or dreams. He has a material view of life. He'll fight for his country in time of war and give all he has. But he has no special desire to serve the people in time of peace.

"In time of war the nation becomes a reality to him; it has an honor to protect, a flag which must go forward. He loves the men in his regiment. He loves the army as a great fighting force. He loves the game of life when it is a physical fighting game. But in time of peace the nation is to him a conglomeration of selfish individuals leading separate lives, each for his own pleasure. The game of daily living becomes an indoor task, as uninteresting to him as his college courses. He has no desire to play any

conspicuous part in this game. Service to society is quite an empty phrase. He is at his best as a soldier. He recognizes this. He should remain a soldier. I am dragging him back to civilian life—for what?—for our common unhappiness."

She stood up abruptly and walked through the door into the little bedroom, just off the living room. I sat for some miserable minutes crumpled in my chair. I felt as sick at heart as she. I knew that she did not want me to voice my vain regrets that intertwined with hers. Yet it was intolerable to remain silent. I walked across the room, turned back and lighted a cigarette. It tasted bitter and I put it out.

Should I be dumb and let her fight out this conflict alone? That would be the worldly judgment. She was married. She belonged to someone else. No, she did not belong to anyone. She was simply married to another man, a man who loved her. Well, I thought defiantly, I love her too. The mere fact of his love gives him no greater right than my love gives me. But this man had given himself to her, was standing ready to continue to give up his own ambitions to serve her. I had given up nothing for her. Nevertheless my failure to give had not been selfish, because for years I had wanted to give her anything that I had that she might need or desire.

Now she was facing a most critical decision. If my attitude could have any bearing on that decision was she not entitled to know it? Yet if she decided

to separate from her husband must it not be on the basis of failure in that marriage rather than on any thought or prospect of success in another? Finally it came to this: Would she wish me to speak out? Would it make her problem easier or harder? Should I not suggest my thought and be guided by her response? I began to put my feeling for her into tentative phrases. The moment I did so it rose within me and overflowed my self-control, as irresistible as the tides.

I stepped over to the closed door and as I raised my hand to knock, she opened it.

"Excuse me," she began. Then she must have read in my eyes all that I would say, for her voice broke and, with a quick, revealing look that showed how her thought had met mine, she turned back, swayed uncertainly and then dropped down upon a couch at the foot of the bed and buried her face in her arms. For what followed I feel no more responsible than if I had seen her sinking in deep waters and had leaped in to save her. All that I was conscious of, was that the woman I loved had need of me. Nothing else in the whole world seemed to exist except her distress and my desire to serve her need.

I knelt beside her and told her that I loved her and that there was no purpose in living to be compared to the desire for her happiness, no joy in living except in the thought that my living might bring her joy; that if I must live alone, I should live for her; that she must not think of my love as demanding

anything of her, but as an offering of all that I might be to her, as she might be able to use me.

It seemed that for the first time in my life I was utterly sure of my feeling and my purpose and that it was all inevitable and right. I think that in the unrestrained madness of declaring my long pent-up emotion I found my greatest certainty in life. Even in sub-conscious wonderment at my own conviction, I had the sense that it was final and unshakable. At last I knew. This was my dream come true, my dream that there was a Purpose, which when revealed would banish doubt.

"This may be utterly wrong of me," I whispered, "by every test that I have learned. But every atom of my being assures me that it is right, tells me that you must know, tells me that my love would be a weak thing if it did not smash through every barrier between us, in the hour of your need. Perhaps you don't want me, but I know that you want my love and it is all yours—without a condition—I'm asking nothing in return."

She had not spoken. But she had not turned away as I had put my arms around her and drawn myself nearer and nearer to that hidden head. Then somehow her arms slipped over my shoulders, bringing my eager lips close to her white throat. For a long time we remained motionless save as her bosom rose and fell against my cheek. Then I ventured to look up and saw her eyes shining down upon me. And as I looked their expression underwent a terrible change—from love to fear, a fear, I felt, not for

herself but for me. Her arms relaxed. I turned, following her gaze, and through the open door of the bedroom saw the outer door of the apartment swung open and Colonel Fairfield standing there.

I stood up as he slammed the door behind him and crossed the narrow room. Midway he stopped.

"By God!" he began, and then seemed at a loss for anything else to say. There was nothing for me to say, so I waited for him. After a long pause he began again:

"You damned——"

"Stop it!" cried Irma, rising and brushing by me before I could hold her back. "This isn't going to be a bar-room brawl. There isn't going to be any deception either. You have seen all there is to see. You know all there is to know. So let's face the facts as two decent men and a decent woman should."

"Decent?" he repeated glaring at me over her as she stood between us.

"Edson," she said sharply.

He looked at her long and intently. He laid his hands on her shoulders.

"You're on the square," he said a little thickly. "I believe that, even after what I saw. But this snake——"

He pushed her to one side and took a step toward me.

"Are you stricken dumb?" he demanded. "Have you anything to say before I throw you out of here?"

"Yes, I have a great deal to say. But will you listen?"

He had come very close to me and from the look in his eyes as well as from his breath I knew he had been drinking heavily. He was not drunk, but very dangerous. It was a great tribute to Irma that he had not attacked me already. His jaws were set and lips drawn back like those of a bull-dog ready to spring. Irma touched his arm.

"You must listen, Edson. If you care anything about me you must listen and be just."

"I'll give you five minutes," he said, plunging into a heavy chair. "But you remain standing, you don't sit down in my house again."

I waved back Irma's protest.

"You are absolutely right, Colonel. I'll stand. Please sit down, Irma."

She walked over beside me.

"If the culprits are to stand, then I must stand," she said. "We two culprits will stand together, in *your* house. I understand it is no longer mine."

He half rose. His face grew purple red. I saw the veins stand out at the temples. Then he flung himself back in the chair.

"By God, you're magnificent!" he muttered. "Sit down, both of you. Sit down and let's get this over. But don't you try to defend my wife." He shook his finger at me. "She needs no defense with me. You speak for yourself."

"I never thought of questioning that," I answered. "Nor shall I defend myself. I wish only to explain. I haven't allowed myself to fall in love with your wife, Colonel Fairfield. I was in love with her long

before she knew you. You may think that I tried to win away your wife when you were serving your country, making my offense worse than in ordinary times. But I want to tell you that you won away from me the woman I loved when I was doing my best to serve my country, and I hold that was no wrong. It was your right. But you have made me suffer, so don't think you are the only injured one.

"Then when I came back home and found that you had married the woman I loved, I did not try to break up your home. You will believe Irma, if not me, and she will tell you that I never made love to her, that I never asked her to leave you. You know that she wouldn't have tolerated that."

Irma broke in.

"Edson, I've been unfair to you in one thing. I did tell Rodney that our marriage had been a mistake, just as I have told you. It seemed that I must talk with someone. I couldn't think this all out alone. But there has been no love-making. That is true. You saw all there ever was to-night, when I became overstrained and broke down and Rodney tried to comfort me.

"Quite comforting, I'd say," he sneered, his face growing very hard.

"I'm not trying to lie out of this," I said hastily. "I lost my self-control and told Irma for the first time in my life that I loved her. I intended not to do that; but the fact is that I did. She made no answer to me. If you and she go on together, of

course you would not tolerate my presence and she would not want to see me."

"We are going on together," he said grimly.

"You may know that I shall not try to prevent that. That decision lies with you two. But in considering it you must know that what you have seen to-night came entirely from my feeling and my lack of self-control. All that which should not have been said and done, was said and done by me. I owe Irma as well as you my deep apologies. I don't blame you for wanting to throw me out, but a row of that sort would punish Irma as much as me. If you would like to meet me somewhere to take it out on me, I'll give you the opportunity. But I think you will prefer not to have that episode here."

"A very pretty speech," he said roughly. "Why don't you applaud, Irma? It was made for your benefit. Very noble. Now if that's all you have to say, please get out, with this understanding—if you ever speak or write to, or attempt to see my wife again, I'll settle the whole score with you, as soon as I can get at you, no matter where I find you. That's all."

I had my hand on the door knob, when Irma spoke.

"Wait a minute, Rodney. That isn't quite all. I've something to say to you and I'll say it now when Edson can hear me. I am a married woman and I shall fulfill every obligation to my husband that I recognize. But I am no man's property. You

may speak to me or write to me or see me as you see fit. If my husband will not permit that in his house, then his house will not be mine. Wherever I have a home you will be welcome. There is nothing that I am ashamed of, or that I regret, in anything that has ever passed between us. I'm sorry for this unpleasant scene at the end of the evening, but I want to thank you for coming over."

She crossed the room and held out her hand with a cheery little, "good-night," and as I closed the door behind me I saw her turn back to where Colonel Fairfield sat leaning forward in his chair with a puzzled glare wherein anger and admiration were strangely mingled.

CHAPTER XXIV

Civil War

IT is spring in the year 1920 as I start on the final chapters of my story. After what has occurred in the last few months I am sure that it is worth writing, because I feel that I have achieved something. I see now that I have failed to use my life to its largest possibilities. But the apparent wreck which I have made of it deserves explanation. At least to a few people who think, it may be made clear that even a life such as mine has a purpose, and that I have fulfilled a part of that purpose.

When the warning signs of the great miners' strike appeared at the end of summer last year I must admit that I was unsympathetic. In common with the opinion of my associates I thought that labor had been treated pretty generously during the war and that now in reconstruction days labor should give capital a chance to get our industries back on a profitable peace basis. Some of my labor leader friends soon disabused me of this prejudice. They brought me proof of the outrageous profits which the mine owners had made during the war, and of the miserably low average wages of the miners, wages on which they could not supply their families

with even necessities for wholesome living at the high post-war prices.

Then I had a coal operator on the witness stand in a case I tried in September. His testimony showed that his company, one of the larger national enterprises, was making from five to ten times what he admitted was an ample profit per ton of coal. He told of mines closed down, of coke ovens shut down, while the price of coal and coke mounted higher. He gave the explanation that many of the operators had made so much money during the war that they did not care for the trouble of operating at moderate prices. So when the total demand decreased they lessened the total supply. He insisted there was no combination of operators, that these things just happened; decreased demand, decreased supply, thus maintaining excessive prices.

I voiced my indignation loudly before newspaper reporters but none of this testimony got into the papers. A strike was imminent and the powerful coal operators already were preparing a press campaign to arouse public sentiment against the miners. So this information on the other side must be kept from the public. And it was.

As the strike drew near, some of the national labor leaders, with whom I had come into friendly relations in the railroad rate battle, invited me into various conferences. A strike on the Steel Corporation was also imminent. All union officials realized that a long struggle between organized labor and organized money was about to begin. During the

war there had been a truce, an era of almost good feeling. But labor had made some gains that the financial powers had deeply resented and these powers had resolved with the coming of peace that the increased authority of the unions should be challenged. The supremacy of the ruling class was not yet menaced but it had been threatened and the more intolerant of the influential controllers of industry had decided that the time was ripe for a reassertion of their former mastery. I did not believe in all the talk which I heard of a "Wall Street conspiracy" to destroy union labor, but there were enough evidences of concerted action to make the solidification of the labor opposition an obvious necessity.

"Wilson is against us," I was told; "that is, the government is against us. We don't know whether there is any Wilson, since his illness. No one can see him and no one knows just who is running the White House. You could see him during the war. Will you try now?"

"I'll try," I said, "although from what I've heard I doubt if I shall get anywhere."

So I went back to Washington on a fruitless quest. I stayed there a week, but I did not see the President, nor could I find out who was running the administration. Everything was covered with mystery. Presidential politics, in anticipation of the 1920 election, were adding to the disheartening confusion of a government whose chief magistrate was mysteriously ill and unapproachable. I did get con-

vincing information that the Attorney General was a candidate for the democratic nomination and was playing the game for support from the anti-labor interests. This meant that the full force of the Department of Justice and, through it, the power of the courts would be thrown against the wage-earners in the impending struggle.

During these days of quiet investigation and waiting I had several unhappy talks with Irma. She was living again with Miss Stevenson. Despite her earnest protests Colonel Fairfield had resigned from the army and had gone back to his old work in New York City. The more she had tried to persuade him to follow his strong interest and stay in the service, the more resolved he had been to prove her judgment all wrong and to show her that he could do great things in New York. He clung obstinately to the idea that her feeling that he would not be successful was the real reason why she wanted to be free from their marriage. He insisted that when he had "made good" she would see things differently. He would not even discuss a divorce. He was not going to let her cast him aside just because she thought he was going to be a failure and that "that damned Merrill has a great career ahead of him."

"He thinks it is all a matter of ambition with me, Rodney," she explained. "He thinks that I am attracted to you because you have held a big office and have made a good deal of money, and that I am anxious for a position of wealth and influence. He thinks I am contrasting a small, poor life with

him against a big, rich life with you. He is sure that if he can make a lot of money, I will turn back to him. What a low estimate to place on me! The truth is that my greatest worry in the thought of marriage to you is that we might both be too impractical to give worldly success its full value, the thought that perhaps you need a more practical mate than I should be."

"Do you think he will succeed under this strong stimulus?"

"Oh, I do wish he could make a million in a year. The fact that it didn't change me might prove to him how wrong he is. Also I'm sure that if he had plenty of money he would find other things—in fact, other women—so attractive that he would soon want to be free from his stubborn and unappreciative wife. But that isn't what will happen. He will drift along, expecting from year to year to make a fortune, growing more resentful of my attitude and more determined not to set me free. And think of it! There is nothing I can do. As long as he chooses he can hold me, hold me to the form of a marriage that has no substance in it. Think of it! The world talks and talks of freedom as the most priceless thing in life, freedom to develop one's own life, to live out one's own ideals; and yet a man or a woman can use marriage as a chain with which to hold another person in slavery—and do it in the name of morality—and worst of all, in the name of love!"

"Irma, must you stay in Washington?"

"Yes, yes, Rodney, I must. Don't try to tempt me away. Perhaps his resolution may break down sooner than I dare to hope, if I give him a chance. I know what you are thinking of and I should love to live in the same city with you, but I must not. Here I have my little foolish work to do with Mrs. Grinsmore; something to occupy my mind. If I went to Chicago, I should have nothing to do except to be with you and we would be together far too much. To be together and yet apart would be too great a strain.

"Then my going to Chicago would harden Ed's will beyond all breaking. He's not a weak man, as you know. He might come out there and make a dreadful row. But if he stayed away he would set his mind against all reason and hold me tied for life. No, that would be madness. I must stay away from you and just hope and pray."

The return trip from Washington was full of discomforting thoughts. I felt at outs with all the ruling forces of society. Political forces seemed bent on crushing the aspirations of a great mass of men struggling against working conditions that were essentially slavery. Social forces seemed bent on crushing the aspirations of one woman struggling against living conditions that were essentially slavery. The desires of the workers were no more than the natural, righteous desires of free men to obtain a value in their lives fairly equal to the value to other lives of their labor. The desire of the woman I

loved was the natural, righteous desire of a free woman to obtain a value in her life fairly equal to the value to a man's life of what she had to give to him.

The managers of the coal industry were not giving the workers anywhere near the living value of their work to others. What right had the political forces of a government of free people to deny these workers freedom to give or to withhold their service at their own will? The present husband of this woman could not give her anywhere near the value of what she had to give a husband. What right had the moral forces of a society of free people to deny her freedom to give or to withhold her service at her own will?

I appreciated thoroughly the hopeless wrath of the exploited worker who was faced at every turn with moral and legal barriers against his effort to exercise, not a privilege, but a fundamental right, to those who believe in liberty and democracy. I felt the same hopeless wrath with the moral and legal barriers against Irma's free right, to choose with whom she would or would not live as a wife.

A man in the smoking compartment loudly asserted that the workers should live up to their contracts.

"What contracts?" I asked.

"Their contracts to work for an agreed wage."

"Has anybody agreed to furnish them work?" I inquired.

"Of course not; you can't guarantee a man work, when you can't tell how much work there is going to be."

"Then the contract you speak of is just an agreement on one side to sell something for a price, but no agreement of the other side to buy."

"Well isn't that a good contract?"

"I think if you ask any lawyer he will tell you that a man isn't bound to go on selling to another man who hasn't agreed to buy. As a business man would you care to be bound to sell to another man who didn't agree to buy? Pretty one-sided, isn't it?"

A long wordy discussion ensued with much meaningless talk of right and wrong and loyalty and obligation. That night, lying in my berth, I puzzled much over the loyalty and obligation of employer and employee, of husband and wife. Were we not much inclined to demand only loyalty on one side and the fulfillment of a one-sided obligation? The basis of a true obligation must be mutual interest. The employer of fifty thousand men wanted them to be loyal to what he pleasantly called, in after dinner speeches, "their common business." But if business were dull or prices were falling he might decide to lay off five thousand men without even discussing the matter with them. What was their attitude toward a business from which they might be separated, and thereby deprived of a livelihood, on a few days' notice? No wonder they didn't feel much obligation or loyalty to that business.

Colonel Fairfield claimed that his love for Irma

imposed on her the obligation to devote herself to his happiness. But his love for her was a desire for what he wanted from her—not a desire to give her what she wanted. Why should not the obligation of his love bind him to sacrifice, rather than bind her? But, perhaps he asserted that it was the obligation of marriage, not of love, upon which he insisted. She had made a contract and must keep it. Again I thought of my labor union friends, who fiercely insisted that there was no moral force in any wage contract, that if men through economic pressure or by mistake bound themselves to wages upon which they found that they could not support their families decently, they could not be held morally bound by such agreements. They denied that there could be a moral obligation to sacrifice lives to fulfill a money obligation.

Could there be a moral obligation to make a futile sacrifice of the possibilities of two lives to fulfill a marriage agreement to protect and cherish each other's lives? Was there a moral obligation to bring children into the world without love and to develop them to maturity in a loveless home? There is a legal principle that a contract engendered in fraud is not binding. Was there not a moral principle—which should be given legal sanction—that a contract on becoming a fraud should be no longer binding?

My thought ran on in this fashion:

Men and women in civilized countries cannot make legally enforcible contracts which require servitude.

Great judges have held that it is "an invasion of one's natural liberty to compel him to work for or to remain in the personal service of another." Hence men and women may not be compelled to give personal service, save in the one instance where forced personal service is the most degrading of all servitudes—in the fulfillment of the marriage contract. My laboring friends are fighting an ancient battle over again, the fight for human freedom against tyranny in its ancient character, but operating with new devices. To-day as yesterday it is the tyranny of economic power, the power to say: serve or suffer. Irma's struggle is a part of the same warfare and her tyrant says: serve or suffer. I would give my all to battle for her, but she must fight it out alone. At least I feel that I can fight in the same cause for these men who are looking to me for aid. I can give them the best that is in me and feel as though in a way I were striking a blow for her.

. . . . .

This soliloquizing will show the state of mind in which I returned to Chicago. It may explain somewhat the violence of my subsequent revolt. When a man gets a thwarted love for a woman mixed up in his motives for giving battle to an entrenched evil, his spirit may take on that fanaticism which is dangerous alike to the foe and to the fighter. I was desperately inspired to grapple with some "hydra-headed wrong" and the opportunity came upon me very soon.

. . . . .

As the day of the great strike drew near, the law officers of the government announced their intention to obtain a sweeping injunction which would paralyze the activity of every important union official. They were to be forbidden to communicate with each other in any way in order to carry on the strike, forbidden to use the union funds to pay strike benefits to keep the strikers' families from starving, not merely forbidden to carry out all their duties to their organizations but actually ordered to violate their instructions and to sign orders directing the men who had voted to strike, to stop striking, required to order men to work who had decided to refuse to work. Every constitutional guarantee essential to preserve human liberty was to be ignored. The rights of free speech, free press, free assemblage, and freedom of labor were to be disregarded. Trial by jury was to be denied; for if these men refused to obey the court they would be sent to jail for contempt of court, their offending and their punishment to be determined by a single judge, without any trial by a "jury of their peers."

It was hard to believe that these advance notices of tyrannical abuse of power could be reliable. Yet we were informed that they were. A group of higher union officials with a staff of lawyers sat in practically continuous session for thirty-six hours debating the best course of action to meet this assault on their liberties. At the outset the labor leaders were recklessly belligerent. They would rot in cells for months or years rather than bow to such orders!

They would call upon all organized labor for a general strike! They would stop the wheels of private industry and public utilities so the cities should be in darkness at night and silent in the days! The railroads, the telegraph and telephone lines should be dead until the "Wall Street gang" in terror told their political puppets at Washington to call off the courts and end the civil war!

But the worried lawyers sapped this courage, hour by hour. National leaders of other trades sent hesitating, fearful messages, advising "no hasty or violent action." It was pointed out that, with their treasuries sealed, their leaders in jail, the newspapers alienating public opinion from "law-breakers" and "hot-headed radicals," the union organizations would be smashed. Every weak or doubting worker would be taken away from the ranks. Other unions dreading like injury would hesitate to risk their organization strength in such a drastic fight. An "attack on the courts" was always a dangerous procedure, sure to antagonize a great share of public opinion. Even the great Roosevelt had lost most heavily in popularity when his opponents could claim that he was destroying respect for the courts.

As I saw the courage, I might almost say the manhood, oozing out of the conferees my heart grew bitter. It was after many hours that one of my friends, noticing my long silence, stood up and said:

"We have heard from several of the lawyers, but one man, I've been waiting for, hasn't spoken. I

think we would all be interested to know how he feels. I'd like to hear from Rodney Merrill."

I stood for a few minutes looking over my audience. I saw for the most part men of rugged faces, some kindly, some wistful but all rather hard, the faces of men for whom life had been a battle and who wore the scars on their cheeks. But also I saw another look that I did not like, a shade of fear, not the fear of a fight, but the fear of unknown forces, foreheads lined with worry over a grapple with superior powers. That was what I resented most, a silent acknowledgment of the superiority of the powers against them. I did not blame them for this feeling but I resented it as a self-depreciation in men who often talked arrogantly and yet seemed in their hearts to admit an unworthiness for the rights they demanded, which made their cause seem unworthy, whereas I felt it was great and righteous. In this reaction I began speaking:

"I think that men who are willing to be slaves, will always be slaves!"

There was a confusion of assent and antagonism. I waited for quiet and then went on:

"I agree with all that has been said of the dangers of revolt. These dangers will always be present and tyranny will use them to check every timid soul that yearns for freedom but dares not fight its way free. I should like to stand up before a judge who dared to issue such an order and to defy—not the court but the man who attempted to use his judicial

office in violation of his oath of office, to destroy the constitutional rights he is sworn to preserve, the natural rights of the free men of this democracy. With four hundred thousand men back of me I believe I could enforce the law even against a lawless judge."

A burly leader arose and shook his fist at me.

"You say you'd stand up," he shouted. "But you lawyers just talk. Your skin would be safe. We fellows would have to stand up and take the punishment."

They tell me that my face turned very white. I know that I was shaking with rage. In that moment I made my decision, the quickest, most important move of my life, the one of which I am most proud —and most ashamed; proud, because it was the gift of all I had for an ideal; ashamed, because I made it without thinking. I acted on pure emotion. I should feel so much more worthy of my own approval if I had decided in cold blood. And now I am not sure that in reflection I should have had the vision and the courage.

"My friend," I cried, "I'll stand up all alone. You can decide to bow to the court if you will, but before you do that, if you people will give me the chance, I will stand up and tell that man who usurps a power never granted him that he is a law breaker who has violated his oath to defend the Constitution. You give me the chance and I'll take your punishment."

Then the battle of words began anew and no

decision had been reached when adjournment was voted from sheer weariness long hours afterward.

A few days later another all-night session was held. In the meantime the hateful injunction order had been served on all the labor leaders. On the following day they were to appear before the judge and sign telegrams canceling the strike orders and directing the miners to return to work—unless they decided to defy the court. I had prepared a statement denying the power of the court to override the Constitution. If the men voted to refuse to obey the injunction this would be their statement. If they voted to obey, I stood ready to make the statement alone as a declaration by their attorney of their legal rights.

The other lawyers present all agreed that my legal position was correct but they all advised against any attempt by the men to stand on their legal rights. They could see nothing but ruin for the unions in a contest with the government. They predicted disaster for trade unionism, if its leaders ever allowed their organizations to defy the law. In debate they admitted that the injunction was not lawful—but insisted that to refuse to obey an order of court meant to defy the law in the eyes of most people. They would not understand that the judge who issued an order beyond his power was the one who was defying the law.

It was nearly five o'clock in the morning before the final vote was taken and the decision was made to bow to the will of the judge. Then my burly

friend who had attacked me in the previous meeting arose and demanded of the weary, resentful group that they should authorize me to make my protest before they announced their submission. In his bloodshot, heavy-lidded eyes I saw a bitter desire to hear the judge defied and to see me crucified, as some compensation for the humiliation of those who must accept defeat. I think this was the prevailing spirit. They passed the motion with a whoop. Then, after another resolution that no advance information should be given to the newspapers, the crowd of worn and angry men staggered out of the meeting room. Inside two hours the newspapers were on the streets with the headlines: "Miners will protest and submit."

CHAPTER XXV

The Spotted Robe

AT ten o'clock in the morning the leaders of the mine workers were assembled in the federal court room. The gavel banged and the judge ascended the bench. He looked, as he was, the ideal instrument for the enthronement of tyranny in the name of democracy. He was no debased mercenary tool of the invisible government. In his cold, clean-hewn, narrow face was shown the zeal of the man who does wrong because he believes it to be right. He was completely corrupted, not by money, but by prejudice. He was the perfect product of a system for obtaining judges, which insures in nine cases out of ten at least, that they shall be human but bloodless scales that will always show false weights, whereby property rights will outweigh human rights, whereby the rights of those who exploit will outweigh the rights of those who serve, and whereby precedent and security will outweigh progress and liberty, in every crucial test.

The case was formally called.

"Are the respondents present?" said the judge in a thin, crisp voice.

One of the lawyers stepped forward.

"All those who have been served are present in person or represented by counsel."

"Are the orders prepared for these officials to sign instructing the men that they are not to strike?"

"They are," answered the assistant attorney general who had come from Washington and obtained the injunction.

The labor lawyer, a gaunt, kindly old man named Merton, raised a nervous hand and announced with feeble resolution:

"We have a motion to present to set aside the injunctive order. We desire to be heard."

"I have gone into the question very thoroughly," said the court. "I shall not vacate the injunction."

"But you will not deny us even an opportunity to be heard?" gasped Merton.

"I'll give you one hour if you insist," answered the court ungraciously.

For three-quarters of an hour the lawyer struggled to present his case against a continual fire of assertions by the court:

"Don't waste time on that point . . . I disagree with your interpretation of that decision . . . Don't quote the Constitution to me. I'm familiar with it. . . . That law is not binding on this court . . . No use reading that opinion. I shouldn't follow it if it supported you, but it doesn't."

Finally Merton's voice stuck in his throat. He started a sentence three times and then gave up the hopeless effort to argue.

"I see your honor is against me," he said thickly.

"You might have seen that some time ago," remarked the judge harshly.

The lawyer stumbled to his seat.

"Motion is overruled," came with machine-like precision from the bench. "Are the respondents prepared to obey the order of the court?"

It was my time. The judge eyed me sharply as I arose. Doubtless he had been informed in advance of my intentions and had determined that they should not be fulfilled.

"If your honor please," I began, "I have a statement to present in behalf of all the respondents."

"I don't wish to hear any statements," snapped the judge; "nor to hear from any more lawyers. Let the respondents stand up and answer, yes or no. Do they intend to obey the order of this court?"

"This court has issued no order," I said, my voice rising with my anger. "No court in this nation has power to issue any order depriving men of their constitutional rights. The courts are the servants, not the masters, of the Constitution."

"Mr. Merrill," snarled the judge, rising to his feet, "if you attempt to reargue a motion I have overruled I shall commit you to jail forthwith for contempt of court."

"I am not arguing a motion now, *Mister* Hendrickson," I replied fiercely. "I am not addressing a judge. I am speaking to a man who without a shadow of authority has dared to sign his name as a judge of the United States District Court to an

order which no judge of that court, or any other court in this land, has any power to issue. That order is utterly void and no one is bound to obey it. You signed that order as a man, not as a judge, and I am here to tell you, man to man, that the violation of that order is not a contempt of court. It is only the contempt of a free man for a destroyer of liberty."

"Take that man into custody!" cried the judge. But as the deputy marshal hurried toward me I fired my last shot.

"There is the statement which you would not permit me to read," I said. "The people will read it, if you will not."

I flung the typewritten statement on the table and tossed a bundle of printed copies to the newspaper men.

"Seize those papers!" called out the judge. "And let me inform every newspaper man in this court room that I shall hold in contempt of court any paper which prints any of the statements made orally or in writing by this man, which I hold to be contemptuous. I'll read this statement now to myself."

As I stood before the bench with the round-faced, self-important deputy marshal at my side, I had considerable satisfaction in watching Judge Hendrickson's face. He was really an able lawyer, and I knew that the statement with its cold, cutting analysis of his usurpation of power would hurt him far more than even my previous scornful rage. He would know in his brain that he was utterly wrong, even

if his perverted emotions still assured him that it was his duty to crush the miners' strike.

Paragraph by paragraph I could follow his thought as he read:

"The Constitution of the United States is the Supreme Law of the land. The decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States are final authority in interpreting the Constitution. The federal judges are sworn to support the Constitution, and are required to follow the decisions of the Supreme Court. Congress cannot grant a judge the power to disregard the Constitution.

"The Constitution provides: 'Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble.' The Constitution provides: 'Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States.'

"The Supreme Court has held that under these provisions workers have the right to strike, and has held that no court can compel them to work against their will."

Then he read the quotations from the Supreme Court, the statement of the law that his injunction violated, and his eyes narrowed and his jaws set obstinately; for this is what he read:

"The right of a person to sell his labor upon such terms as he deems proper is in its essence the same as the right of the purchaser of labor to prescribe the conditions upon which he will accept such labor from the person offering to sell it. So the right of

the employee to quit the service of an employer for whatever reason is the same as the right of the employer for whatever reason to dispense with the services of such employee."

Then he read the stalwart words of one of the great judges of that Supreme Court:

"It would be an invasion of one's natural liberty to compel him to work for or to remain in the personal service of another. One who is placed under such constraint is in a condition of involuntary servitude—a condition which the Supreme Law of the land declares shall not exist in the United States or in any place subject to their jurisdiction."

But I could see in the impatient shake of his head the thought that general principles could not control this exceptional case; the welfare and prosperity of the country demanded that coal be produced—even though labor be temporarily enslaved. And then he read again from the Supreme Court words written only a few years before:

"There is no more important concern than to safeguard the freedom of labor, upon which alone can enduring prosperity be based."

Then he passed on to the Act of Congress which specifically prohibited him as a judge from issuing the injunction which he had issued. He read this plain language: "And no restraining order or injunction shall prohibit any person or persons, whether singly or in concert, from terminating any relation of employment, or from ceasing to perform any work or labor, or from recommending, advis-

ing or persuading others by peaceful means so to do."

I watched his face grow shadowed as he read the charge that he had violated the Constitution and the Act of Congress which he had been sworn to enforce, that he had refused to follow the Supreme Court, his judicial master, that he had used his power of enforcing the law as the means for breaking the law, that his order was entitled neither to obedience nor to respect, that it was not the act of a judge but the lawless act of a usurper exercising power without right, that he was using the forms and institutions of our government, which was established to preserve liberty, as a means to destroy liberty.

He read the long statement through to its end, an appeal to the American people to array themselves behind the workers who were fighting for something more important than coal, for something which the founders of the republic had held to be more important than life itself. They were fighting for human freedom.

He flung down the typewritten pages.

"Let the government prepare a further injunction," he announced, "prohibiting the circulation, printing or publishing in any form whatsoever of any part of the oral or written statements made by Rodney Merrill in this case or of any similar statements made by him or any other person seeking to incite opposition to obedience to the orders of this court. It is also the order of this court that you, Rodney Merrill, stand committed to jail—I'll fix the place in

the warrant of commitment—for the period of three months, for contempt of this court. I trust that confinement may bring you a calmer judgment and some sense of respect for the law and the courts, so that before the expiration of the term of imprisonment I may have the pleasure of hearing your application to purge yourself of the most flagrant and insolent contempt which I believe can be found in the records of the American courts."

I smiled grimly as this sentence was passed upon me, because I was recollecting that my statement had been telegraphed confidentially just prior to the opening of court to every leading newspaper in the country, and that it was now printed in all the afternoon papers and that his latest injunction could not possibly prevent nation-wide publicity. If he had known this he would have sentenced me probably for at least six months. But, the sentence now having been imposed he would be powerless to increase the punishment. So I smiled at my little secret jest, although it may have appeared that my cheerfulness was mere bravado.

Indeed I felt rather cheerful, although the looks that followed my departure from the courtroom might have warned me of the coming hostility of the public attitude, which I had not fully anticipated. Somehow I had great confidence in the fundamental soundness of my legal position, which I felt would meet with quiet sympathy among lawyers, and I had confidence in the fundamental appeal to public sup-

port which I felt lay in such an obvious personal sacrifice for the supreme American ideal.

The happenings of the days following quickly destroyed this mistaken confidence. Lawyers and laymen alike responded generally to the note of horror which the newspapers struck in noisy unison—horror that a lawyer of national reputation, a man who had been honored with high office, had suddenly become a "red radical" and defied the majesty of the law! All fine distinctions between what was the law and what the judge said was the law, were swept aside by this outrageous fact. I had advised a refusal to obey the courts. I had advocated rebellion. And then I had crowned my sin with infamy in denouncing a judge to his face while he was sitting on his own bench. I had even dared to call him "Mister!"

Horrors upon horrors! I had called His Honor —a Judge enthroned upon the bench, all wrapped up in a silken robe—I had called this sanctified person, "Mister!" One friendly editor suggested that I had gone insane from overstrain in war work followed by intensive labor in preparation for this important hearing. This was the kindliest comment which I can recall. I was most amused, however, to observe that all the papers printed copious extracts from my written statement and quoted in full my oral castigation of the judge. It was evident that, since the early papers had carried all the important parts of my attack, the other papers had come to a common decision to disregard the judge's injunction

against printing my statements. Of course Judge Hendrickson never punished any one for this contempt. It must have galled him to have my justification of my contempt spread broadcast. But he would have been most ungrateful and impolitic to have punished men who only printed my remarks in order to demonstrate to their readers what a wicked person I must be and how generous the judge had been merely to send me to jail for three months and not to order me hanged on the spot!

I am writing these words in prison. In all the imaginings of the course of my life, which came before me while writing this autobiography, it never occurred to me that my story might end in jail. Yet now I see that this is a fitting place for it to end. The desire for real achievement in life is a very dangerous one. Progress must be forced against the opposition of the powers that be, whose selfish interests are in the maintenance of things as they are. Thus there is always a warning to the impatient reformer in the cry that echoes down from an older day: "Right forever on the scaffold; wrong forever on the throne."

My defiance of the court may have been rash and unwise, but it was an expression of an ideal that uplifts mankind, the love of freedom. The court order against me expressed the fear and cruelty of the oppressor who beats down the aspirations of humanity. In the just judgment of after years I feel that the apparent stain on my life will be washed

away and that the ermine which enwraps the judicial despot will be seen as a spotted robe. Yet I do not approve of my own conduct as the best use which I could have made of my life opportunity. I have spent many hours reviewing my motives and my acts, and I find much to regret in what I have done and much to revise in opinions that I have held quite stubbornly. These who have the patience to read my story through will find in it, I trust, not excuse or justification but, let me say, a confession of blindness, an inability, I hope, rather than an unwillingness, to see the guiding lights that might have shown me a better road to a worthier goal.

CHAPTER XXVI

Salvage

IN the first place, why am I in jail? Men who are sentenced to prison usually stay outside the bars for some time. There are bonds and appeals and habeas corpus proceedings, through which the evil day may be at least deferred. But it is particularly hard to evade a commitment for contempt of court in the presence of the court, and in this instance I had little heart to attempt postponement of my punishment. My whole world fell about my ears in one day.

Francis Thompson has expressed perfectly what happened to me:

> I shook the pillaring hours
> And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,
> I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
> My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
> My days have crackled and gone up in smoke.

The day after my revolt I received a letter from the President of the Fanning Company stating that the Board of Directors at a special meeting had voted unanimously to accept my resignation as general counsel. I did not know that I had resigned but I did judge from the letter that my services were

no longer desired! Various other clients took their business elsewhere with more haste than courtesy. Certain organizations of lawyers to which I belonged took prompt steps to eliminate me from their membership. Inside a week it was clear that my professional career was ended. An old personal enemy instigated disbarment proceedings. Of course, I had still some money with which I could have fought official and unofficial punishment. A few—a very few—friends volunteered services to aid me. But the uproar in the newspapers made opposition quite hopeless. The chief political, social and financial powers of the community were bent on my destruction as a warning against all radicalism. I saw that I might as well bow before a storm which I could not breast.

Therefore, I have made no effort to prevent or to postpone my ordained penitence. By good fortune I have a kindly jailer and much opportunity to think and to write. What more could I ask?

The leaders of the mine workers formally submitted to the court's decree, as I was being led away. The process of "digging coal by injunction" is now being tried—with indifferent success, I understand. Indirectly messages come to me that I have a few hundred thousand friends among the workers and that makes up considerably for the loss of a number of friends I once had among people who do no useful work at all. Yet I do not feel that I have served these people, whom I really desired to serve, as well as I might have served, had I chosen my

course more carefully. But of this I shall write later. Now let me speak of Irma. I had a long letter from her yesterday reading in part as follows:

"My dear, dear boy—

"Of course it was magnificent—and folly. I can't quite understand such youthful recklessness in a man of forty-five. I love you for it because it was young and brave. But it is all so misunderstood and you are so misunderstood that you must feel terribly discouraged. And so I comfort you by calling it folly? Oh, you know what I mean. It's a divine sort of folly. I really believe you have fulfilled a Purpose. Yet, I feel that if you were capable of such a deed perhaps there was even more for you to do—some greater stroke. Perhaps this is only your first blow. There may be others for your arm to strike. Let us believe so.

. . . . .

"I am glad that Gene came to see you and it was very thoughtful of you not to write me directly when the newspapers might have learned my name and brought me into the story. Now that you can write freely I am watching every mail.

. . . . .

"Edson writes as obstinately as ever. He will never give me up, he says. Somehow that doesn't worry me as it did. Since I have seen what the law has done to you, I'm afraid I've grown very lawless. His little legal chain on me seems very brittle. I feel that I could break it with my own hands. You and I seem to be forced outside the law and I am happy in the thought of such exile with you.

. . . . .

"You asked me to try to express just why I cannot tolerate the thought of living with Edson. Truly it is not because of you, my dear. Long ago, when I had no assurance that you cared for me, I knew that I could not go through life with him. Some men and women have aspirations in life. Some have only appetites. I don't pretend to say that every life should have aspirations. Perhaps some souls need materialistic lives to give them their destined development. The material things of life must have purpose in themselves or they would not be all of the apparent end and aim of so many lives.

"But other lives are starved with mere materialism. If you or I had nothing to look forward to from day to day except our food and drink and sleep and the pleasures of satisfying body appetites we would be utterly miserable. Yet, for thousands, millions, of people those things seem to be enough. They do not care to give up any of them for what we call ideals or spiritual desires. They think your search for the Purpose is either a delusion or a pose. Yet, it is a real thing to me. It is my own search.

"Edson is a pure materialist and not even ambitious for greatness in material gains. He does a day of work so as to be able to have a good time, as he calls it: to play a game, to see a show, to flirt with a pretty girl, or to drink and gamble with some 'good sports.' He has no desire to grow mentally or spiritually. This is a living death to me—life is just one long decay. He is so utterly unable to understand the reality of intangible things to me that he thinks I imagine these desires just to explain why I like another man better than him. Discussion is hopeless, but it completely convinces me of the impossibility of calling this tie between us a marriage.

"He floats on the surface of living. I cannot float. I must swim to get somewhere or else I shall sink. The metaphor may sound silly, but you know my meaning. Perhaps I'm not heavy enough to dive deep into the waters or strong

enough to swim far, but I know that I'm not light enough just to float.

"Miss Stevenson asks me why I should not continue married to Edson and yet seek in my individual life the fulfillment of my desires. She doesn't understand why I cannot grow mentally alone, even if my husband does not share my aspirations. Of course, one can grow somewhat in spiritual solitude even despite an unsympathetic physical companionship. But I cannot explain to Miss Stevenson, who has always been so much alone, that I think a single life is less than half a life. I don't believe that the only necessity for the association of men and women is in order to reproduce our kind.

"You and I had a talk once about the dynamic force produced from contacts between men and women—as electricity is produced by uniting opposite elements. That cleared up my ideas considerably. I am sure that neither of us can realize the full purpose of our lives alone. We won't generate the right kind of energy except out of a companionship that stimulates us both to the highest use of our powers. Now life with Edson would not only fail to stimulate me but it would actually work against my efforts to energize myself.

"It is very hard for me to express these ideas clearly so that they will appear actual and not visionary, but I feel them intensely. The force of a mental intrusion that cuts my thought in two is just as real to me as the snip of a pair of scissors that cuts a thread. To step into a warm or cold mental atmosphere is just as real to me as to step under a hot or cold shower.

. . . . .

"Edson asks me what this love is that I am seeking. He says I once loved him and I may again, but that even if I may not, why should I seek another love which may also

fade? My answer seems quite insane to him. My feeling is that a lasting bond between a man and a woman must be woven of passionate longing and spiritual longing, intermingled desires for intimacy of body and soul; and that one's mental yearning is not so much a love for the other person as a love for the ideals to be realized through spiritual comradeship. Thus if our ideals are not realized love fades and only passion remains. And passion dies young without love's constant nourishing.

"Recently I found some verses that stirred me deeply. It wasn't that they spoke my exact thought but that they gave me the cheer that others in the world shared my vision—our vision—that others glimpsed the same light and knew it was no will-o'-the-wisp, but a true guiding star."

. . . . .

The verses in Irma's letter I had not seen before and I regret that I cannot give their authorship. But they have a part in this story—so I shall copy them into my manuscript:

. . . . .

THE WOMAN SPEAKS

I do not know this God to whom they pray,
  By whose decree the truth shall count as naught
And I should live this lie throughout my day
  And call this bitter thing the love I sought.

For they have said my heaven was a hell,
  The place where he and I lived once in love,
That dizzy height to which they said we fell—
  All earth below and only stars above!

Sometimes at night when I am left alone
I seek again the path that once we found;
The marks are gone, the way is overgrown,
I listen for a voice and hear no sound.

Then comes a thought, that after all these years
With clumsy, brutal feet have trod me down
And when at last there can be no more tears
When even their strange God will cease to frown,

I may return to that dear place and find—
You!—and I think you will be waiting me—
And we shall marvel that our lives were blind,
Then we were given love by which to see!

. . . . .

That last line haunts me. It speaks the solution of more problems than those of marriage. I catch a vision of humanity stumbling along in the dusk between the darkness of birth and the darkness of death, eyes half-closed and blinded with hates and greeds, yet holding within and rarely used the power of "love by which to see." Surely I have been blind! Even in my revolt I acted in hatred of enemies more than in love of friends. My wrath aroused a counter wrath. I sought to invoke force against wrong, not to inspire love of right. I drew a sword and met a stronger sword. I did not put my full faith in the ideal which I sought to uphold. Men cannot be forced to think right or compelled to be good. They can only be persuaded. I have simply proved again that "he who loses his temper loses

his cause." I don't feel like apologizing to the judge. He was more wrong than I. But I regret my own weakness whereby I destroyed my own power in misusing it.

When I leave this place I must begin life anew. Yet what can I accomplish, compared with what I might have done had I treasured my ideals instead of wasting them in one mad adventure? Is it worth while for me to try to go on? That is a question which I cannot answer. Being unable to answer it I must follow my instinct which tells me that each life must live itself out to do all that can be done to fulfill its hidden design. But there is one problem which I must face. Have I not done with Rodney Merrill? Have I not ruined Rodney Merrill so that this name and personality will stand in the world for a life which I no longer desire to live?

The failures of our lives have drawn Irma and me so closely together that I feel we could never be contented with any lesser intimacy of companionship. Yet Irma Conway and Rodney Merrill cannot join their lives successfully without another revolt against forces too powerful to be challenged. That lesson at least has been taught me by my revolt. Irma and I were impatient souls—and now I see that such impatience is a deadly error in one who seeks a purpose in his living, the impatience that thinks intention is assurance of achievement and demands the reward in advance of the service. One must serve in faith. One must work and trust, or else be unworthy of being given trust.

Irma and I were given love by which to see our possibilities in life with each other. In this illumination we sensed the happiness of giving our lives to the service of something outside ourselves. Then the war came. There is some comfort in feeling that the world madness blinded so many that it is not surprising that our visions were obscured and we lost the light of love in the great glare of hate.

In war work I saw a quick road to greatness. I thought it was greatness of soul that I sought. I fear it was only the illusion of vanity and pride. Irma also sought the short path. I really believe that she married in that mistaken theory of sacrifice from which so many women marry men whom they do not love, but to whom they feel that they can make a great gift. They marry drunkards to reform them, marry disillusioned men to bring back their ideals, and, heaven help them! they marry remorseful widowers to give them a chance not to spoil another woman's life. Irma found a splendid animal lover of life, bravely ready to give up his life for his country and gently soulful with self-pity for the sacrifice. She saw a chance to give him her life in compensation, a chance in a way to give her life for her country, a short-cut to achieving a noble purpose.

Now we are both paying bitterly for our impatient spirits that gambled with life—and lost. We have had to learn an old lesson, that a gambler never wins. It is this realization that the road to real success is long and progress is slow that makes me

dread to begin again at forty-five. Yet what else is there to do?

. . . . .

Since I wrote down my first reactions three weeks have passed and once more I find my viewpoint changed. But I am not disturbed by this mental uncertainty. I am beginning to see that my lack of convictions, about which my friends have jested and I have worried, is not just mental weakness. In fact, I am ready to assert that there is real strength of character in this questioning. The fool is often brave because he is ignorant of danger. The dullard is often self-assured because he lacks imagination.

As suited to my mental and physical state Gene Halliwell sent me a copy of *De Profundis* and I have been rereading it with most intense pleasure. Particularly I found comfort in these sentences:

> People whose desire is solely for self-realization never know where they are going. They can't know. In one sense of the word it is, of course, necessary as the Greek oracle said, to know oneself: that is the first achievement of knowledge. But to recognize that the soul of a man is unknowable, is the ultimate achievement of wisdom. The final mystery is oneself. When one has weighed the sun in the balance, and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven heavens star by star, there still remains oneself. Who can calculate the orbit of his own soul?

Thus I have come to a new judgment concerning my revolt. I still believe that I might have made

more of my life if I had held my place in the world and built power on power until I could have fought a greater battle for the things in which I believe. Yet in the end there would have been defeat—perhaps a greater defeat that would have meant a greater achievement. But it would have been defeat for this particular man who is labeled Rodney Merrill.

Individual victories in the progress of humanity are rare and insignificant. Those who have any large purpose to fulfill must ever ride to defeat. I hesitate to compare my little life with any of the great lives that stand out in the world's chronicles. But I have been rereading much history since I have been in jail and I find that its great stories are those of great defeats. Those who have served mankind have died, on the cross, at the stake, and in chains. They have been hissed in assemblies and jeered at as they passed along the street. Their truth-telling has been proclaimed a lie; their virtue denounced as vice; their revelation scorned as false prophecy. It is the unforgivable sin to think more deeply and to see more clearly than one's generation.

Yet, the course of evolution is so manifest to one who cares to study the past and then is able to fling his imagination ahead to glimpse the future, that eager spirits are ever impatient to hurry their fellows toward the dawn of a better day. This eagerness is their personal tragedy. But surely they play a part in quickening the step of the great, slow masses of mankind in whom there is implanted a

sullen instinct to move toward the light. I am only a little dreamer but I have lived for my dream, and that is something better than to have had no dream or to have denied it.

. . . . . .

I have puzzled much over this freedom for which I felt ready to wreck my fortunes. What is the liberty which we rightly crave? Certainly it is not release from obligation. Now I think I have it. It is freedom from obligations which are not self-imposed. Every duty owed to one's family, to one's companions, or to society, which has final sanction, is a duty to oneself. It is a duty, which if not fulfilled will cost oneself more than the price of fulfillment. The one obligation which all must acknowledge is self-realization. The one right which includes all natural rights is the right of self-development.

Of course, when a man is a member of any group, from the small intimate group of man and wife to the larger, more remote association of citizenship in a nation, he assumes group obligations which he must fulfill and which must be fulfilled for him, in order that he may develop within the group wherein he exists. I do not suggest that one should feel free from such obligations. They may be often unfair and hampering, but they are facts which must be accepted just as one must accept the fact of being born with weak eyes or clumsy hands.

But there are certain group obligations which appeal to me as quite intolerable, because they harm

both the individual and the group. They are what may be called obligations imposed without authority. No one by joining any group—or even by being born into a group—should be held to have authorized the group to limit his freedom to think, to exchange ideas or to give his personal service. One may have wrong ideas and attempt to spread them, but wrong thinking is just as necessary for self-development as right thinking. The man or woman who has never thought wrong does not know why his right thinking is right and has no sound basis upon which he may be relied upon to do right.

Freedom to give or to withhold personal service is, of course, necessary for physical expression of the self-found purpose of the individual. Any interference with this freedom means arrested self-development and in a very real sense a denial of the right to live.

These freedoms of thought and speech and labor have been gradually accepted as natural rights after a struggle of centuries. They are the foundations of the political ideals of the twentieth century, and have been written in plain words into the basic law of our country. For the sworn guardian of that law to deny them, was to commit a high crime against human progress. So I have come at the end of my study to the conviction that I was utterly right and that the judge was utterly wrong, and that my revolt was fully justified.

When I say that my revolt was justified, I do not mean that it was the best use for me to make of my

opportunities. I still doubt that. But I am certain that it was at least a good use, which has given the living of my life some value.

I have sought diligently to determine the motives that caused me to act as I did. Here again I glimpse the dynamic power of the relations of men and women. I deeply resented the legal obligations imposed on Irma, whereby she was required either to live with a man with whom she did not wish to live, or else to live alone. This was not a self-imposed obligation because every woman entering marriage does not commit herself to such slavery. There is many a man in the world who would scorn to contend that a woman had made such a contract in marrying him. Even the marriage vows taken at the altar do not impose that obligation, despite their ancient phrasing, because modern law and custom have qualified them to permit the right of separation for causes which vary according to geography, rather than from differing standards of morality.

Therefore, Irma found herself held to an obligation which was not self-imposed. When she married, if she had considered her marriage as a bond, she would have assumed that in accordance with its unwritten terms she would be entitled to release whenever its conditions became intolerable. She was marrying "an officer and a gentleman," part of whose creed was supposed to be chivalry toward women. She had the right to expect that such a one would not invoke an empty legal form to deny her freedom from a marriage that had lost

the substance of love. Yet he had used the laws of a government dedicated to human liberty as a force with which to imprison her body and to cramp her soul.

My spirit was hot in revolt against this denial of Irma's natural right when I came west to take up the legal battle for the mine-workers. Here I found the same abuse of power, the use of community force to enslave the individual, when the only value of community life is to afford the individual broader and free opportunity to develop himself. The natural rights of the miners had been written down in our fundamental law and thus had been made legal rights. Yet they were to be denied in the name of the law! Every throb of Irma's pain increased the bitterness of my wrath against the enemies of liberty with whom the everlasting battle must be fought —the warfare between the Takers and the Givers, the individual and universal confiict between the brutish creed of conquest and force, and the human faith of service and love.

Service and love may not be compelled. There must be a free will and a free giving if men and women are to use their lives for the development of all life. This at least comes to me as the vision of the Purpose and the means for its achievement. Thus for every free soul there is an obligation to do its little task in the great work of freeing mankind from the bondage of its brute inheritance.

Year by year and era by era the evil that primitive thought and savage tradition impose on the world

becomes more visible in the light of deeper knowledge and higher faith. The necessity for attack upon entrenched error becomes more apparent and the forces of progress increase until the time comes for revolt. Then the slow process of evolution is quickened to the rush of revolution. Humanity leaps ahead. But before this hurrying day arrives there are always many ineffective but significant revolts, wherein impatient souls seek to lead an unready and unwilling host. The swift defeat of the rash idealist seems a futile sacrifice, yet along the track of broken lives of men who sought to serve them, the unready and unwilling host moves on. Thus we, of the company of untimely and lonely revolutionists, impelled by the God who grows within, serve the purpose of our little lives.

* * * * *

To-day I received a disturbing letter from Colonel Fairfield. He writes that a week ago Irma packed her things and moved out of Miss Stevenson's apartment without leaving either an explanation or a future address. He learned this upon telephoning to find out why she had not answered an urgent letter. He assumes that I know where she has gone and demands that I inform him. Indeed I do not know any more than he.

A few days ago I did receive a letter from her, but this is all she wrote:

"I am considering a very important step. If I take it do not expect another letter. This note will explain that I have not changed my feelings toward you in any way. For the rest I must ask you to have faith in me and to know that I have a purpose which is our purpose. I love you as you love me."

I have raced through a hundred hopes and fears. All that I know is the dreadful fact that Irma has disappeared. All of Colonel Fairfield's threatenings cannot give me any greater knowledge. I must remain here a few days more. Then I shall be free—free for what? I must think this out all over again, hoping that I may hear from her before I go, yet fearing that I shall not.

. . . . .

It is the day before my release. I have been very busy with my writing. I have gone over my whole story with painstaking care. As I was writing it I sought to alter many things so that it might not reveal to strangers intimacies which should be kept sacred. I have made many new revisions to insure this protection. Therefore, my manuscript is not a photographic picture of my life. Those who know me well will recognize this. They will find that events and characters do not check with their knowledge. Curious minded strangers will find no satisfaction in trying to identify the persons, places and happenings with actualities. The true and the false have been carefully intermingled. But in essentials

here is a candid story of the life of a man who tried to find a purpose in living and to comprehend and have faith in the God who Grew in him. It is a story of a search for revelation in the deep and significant influence of women on his life. It is completely honest in its analysis of thought and motive that make up the inner life, an analysis which has seemed worth while because I know that my development has not been eccentric or exceptional, but has its counterpart in a multitude of lives. It is probably futile to attempt any further explanation of why I have lived as I have, and why I have written the story down.

A few more words and I shall be done.

I have heard nothing from Irma and my decision is made. Irma has disappeared and to-morrow I shall disappear. Somewhere, somehow, sometime, I shall find her—if not Here—then I shall seek her There.

THE END

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